



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

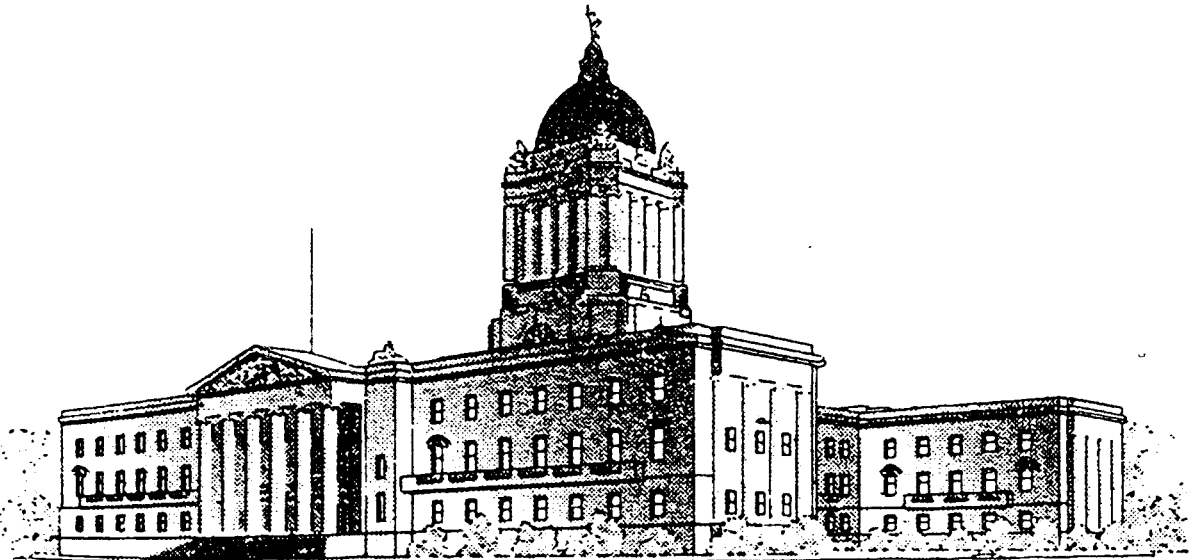
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



Vol. L No. 43 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, June 12, 2000

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 12, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee of Supply

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

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

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Law Amendments
Third Report**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its Third Report.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Committee met on Monday, May 29, 2000, at 10 a.m. and Wednesday, June 7, 2000, at 7 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

Your Committee heard representation on May 29, 2000, on bills as follows:

Bill 20—The Farm Machinery and Equipment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les machines et le matériel agricoles

*Brian Martin – New Holland
Brian Martin – CASE IH Brand
John Schmeiser – Canada West Equipment Dealers Association
Brent Hamre – Canadian Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute
Tom McCrea – PIMA Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada
Scott MacDonald – Private Citizen
Don Dewar – Keystone Agricultural Producers
John Buhler – Buhler Versatile Inc. and Buhler Industries Inc.
Jim Gladstone – Valmar Airflo Inc.*

Written Submissions:

Bill 20—The Farm Machinery and Equipment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les machines et le matériel agricoles

Jennifer Fiske – Canadian Bankers Association

Your Committee has considered:

Bill 11—The Winnipeg Stock Exchange Restructuring and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur la restructuration de la Bourse de Winnipeg et modifications corrélatives

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Your Committee has considered:

Bill 20—The Farm Machinery and Equipment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les machines et le matériel agricoles

and has agreed to report the same with the following amendments:

MOTION:

THAT the proposed section 16.1, as set out in section 5 of the Bill, be amended by striking out "16.11" in the section heading and in the section and substituting "16.12".

MOTION:

THAT the proposed section 16.3, as set out in section 5 of the Bill, be repealed and the following substituted:

Prohibition on termination of dealership agreement

16.3(1) *No vendor shall terminate a dealership agreement*

(a) without cause; and

(b) subject to subsection (2), without an order of the court under subsection 16.5(3).

Exceptions

16.3(2) *A vendor does not require a court order to terminate a dealership agreement if*

(a) the dealer has made an assignment in bankruptcy or has been petitioned into bankruptcy, and has not been discharged from bankruptcy; or

(b) the cause for termination is a cause prescribed in the regulations

MOTION:

THAT the proposed subsection 16.5(1), as set out in section 5 of the Bill, be amended by adding ", if clause 16.3(1)(b) requires an order," after "shall".

MOTION:

THAT the proposed subsection 16.8(1), as set out in section 5 of the Bill, be repealed and the following substituted:

Mediation

16.8(1) *At the request of the dealer or vendor, the court shall by order appoint a mediator, unless it is satisfied that the purpose of the request is to delay its determination under section 16.5 unnecessarily or that mediation is not in the interests of justice. The mediator shall try to facilitate a settlement of the dispute.*

Length of mediation period

16.8(1.1) *The court shall fix the length of the mediation period and may shorten or lengthen the period at the request of the dealer or vendor.*

MOTION:

THAT the section 10 of the Bill be struck out and the following substituted:

10 Section 62 is amended

(a) by adding the following after clause (k):

(k.1) for the purposes of clause 16.3(2)(b), providing for circumstances that constitute cause to terminate a dealership agreement without a court order;

(k.2) for the purposes of clause 16.6(g), providing for circumstances that constitute cause to terminate a dealership agreement;

(k.3) for the purposes of clause 16.7(e), providing for circumstances that do not constitute cause to terminate a dealership agreement;

(b) by renumbering it as subsection 62(1); and

(c) by adding the following as subsection 62(2):

Retroactive regulations

62(2) *A regulation made under any of clauses (1)(k.1) to (k.3) may be made retroactive to a day not earlier than the day on which sections 16.1 to 16.12 come into force.*

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Philippine Heritage Week

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, I am wearing today traditional Filipino dress—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a ministerial statement?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am standing here today in traditional Filipino dress as I and the rest of us mark today as the 102nd anniversary of Philippine independence. On June 12, 1898, the First Republic of the Philippines was declared and the Philippine flag was unfurled. I would like now to read the proclamation of June 11 to June 17, 2000, as Philippine Heritage Week.

WHEREAS people of Filipino descent who have settled in Manitoba and now number in excess of 40 000 and continue to contribute in many outstanding ways to Manitoba's social, economic and political life; and

WHEREAS Philippine independence is a meaningful celebration for all Filipino people and carries with it messages of universal significance that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers; and

WHEREAS the Filipino community in Manitoba annually organizes activities to celebrate and share with all people of Manitoba expressions of joy for the freedom and independence of Filipino people everywhere; and

WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba encourages the promotion of intercultural understanding, mutual respect and universal acceptance of Manitoba's cultural diversity; and

WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba encourages all citizens to respect individual cultural and historical celebration;

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN that we do hereby proclaim June 11 to June 17, 2000, as Philippine Heritage Week in Manitoba and do hereby extend greetings to all Filipinos in our province.

It was signed by Premier Gary Doer and myself as Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. *Salamat po.*

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for

her statement in recognizing the 102nd anniversary of Philippine independence. The Philippine community is an extremely large community in Manitoba and has made a significant contribution to our lives in Manitoba. This government was responsible for the first multicultural policy and The Multicultural Act, recognizing the important contribution that all cultures make to our Manitoba community.

* (13:35)

The Philippine community's contributions include strong family values, strong work ethic, and indeed have had a very positive impact on Manitoba. The members on this side also, I am sure, have participated in many Philippine activities and their celebrations and enjoy their traditional culture, dance, particularly the dance, I must say, the dancing with the sticks—I am not sure what it is called—but I find that extremely entertaining. In my role as Speaker, I had the occasion to hire that community to perform for many other politicians across Canada, and they were extremely impressed with the quality and the brilliance of their costumes, as well.

On this side of the House, we would also like to extend greetings to all Filipinos in our province and thank them for their ongoing contributions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: I want to say briefly that as the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Member for River Heights I want to compliment the Philippine community in Manitoba, the tremendous contribution that they have made, that they are making, and that I am sure they will continue to make in the future. This is a very important anniversary celebration coming up this week, and we join with them in celebrating this important occasion.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us

today from Collège Béliveau 53 Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Eisner. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is for the First Minister. I understand that the Premier will be meeting with the Prime Minister later today for a get-acquainted session. There are obviously many issues of great importance to Manitobans that will be discussed with the Prime Minister, including health care and health-related issues.

Mr. Speaker, the most pressing and unresolved issue continues to be flood aid for Manitoba farmers, many of whom did not get a crop in 1999. Can the Premier please inform the House whether he invited the Prime Minister to meet with affected Manitoba farmers to hear first-hand the devastation that they and their families experienced during the flood of 1999?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Member may recall, or maybe she does not, that after we met with the Prime Minister in I believe it was October or November of 1999, we issued an invitation at that point to have the Prime Minister visit directly the southwest region of Manitoba. We have continued to invite him to visit those producers on every occasion that we have discussed any issue with him. There are a number of issues that are going to be on the agenda to speak to today with the Prime Minister. Health care, yes, is very important; the whole issue of CHST transfers and the cuts that were made in '94 and '95 which has been about \$4.2 billion in cuts, which has been made up by the provinces by about \$8.5 billion; the income support programs for agriculture; the issue of the AECL decommissioning; the issue of the military locations, and the all-party group is meeting later this week on that issue; and, yes, I will be raising the issue of disaster assistance. I understand two issues were raised by the

Premier of Alberta yesterday. One was disaster assistance, the other one was the lack of any income for Alberta after Manitoba and Saskatchewan went ahead with a modest but an agreement on income support.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the First Minister for that answer. He obviously did not, on this occasion, organize anything that would have invited Manitoba farmers to meet directly with the Prime Minister. It is somewhat unfortunate. This is an issue that has not been resolved. There are ongoing issues that farmers not only in southwest Manitoba but in other parts of Manitoba have not found either level of government co-operative in their approach to finding some assistance.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker, I know that the First Minister, during the election campaign, promised a new and co-operative approach and working relationship with the federal government, and all we have seen from this government is the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) walk out of a meeting with her federal counterparts when in fact she did not get her own way—

An Honourable Member: I was standing up for Manitoba farmers, Bonnie.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not consider it necessarily in the spirit of co-operation when one party picks up their ball and bat because they do not get their way and walks out of a meeting instead of staying to stand up for the farmers of Manitoba.

In the spirit of co-operation, I would like to ask the First Minister whether in fact he and the Prime Minister might be making some announcement after their meeting today for those farmers who were devastated during the flood of 1999.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, to be criticized for, quote, not organizing the Prime Minister's tour into Manitoba is a bit silly from the Member opposite who knows better. I can invite the Prime Minister to visit southwest Manitoba, but the last time I looked we were not given the delegated authority to be the advance for the

federal Prime Minister. If that is the only recovery from the Member, not remembering that we had invited the Prime Minister to southwest Manitoba in our first meeting we had with him and in our second meeting we had with him and in our third telephone conversation, which constituted a meeting, I am disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite also referenced the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). Well, we did have some feisty meetings with the federal government, but at the end of the day we were able to get or negotiate a hundred million dollars more than was on the table in last year's budget from members opposite. Now it is not enough, but the Minister of Agriculture needs no lecture after obtaining some \$11 on average per acre.

Thirdly, Premier Klein, yesterday, mentioned that he was upset with this income support program for Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We, too, believe that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Beyond the income support and the change, we have changed the federal-provincial agreement on crop insurance. Crop insurance now covers unseeded acreage due to excessive moisture, something members opposite were not able to achieve. That is an example of co-operation. We have negotiated, with the federal government, reduced freight rates for producers. We worked with the federal government on that proposal, something, again, members opposite could not do when they were in government. Yes, income support is positive, not enough; the freight rates are positive, not enough. The issue of crop insurance is a big step forward. Disaster assistance will be raised by us, and we are not satisfied that southwest Manitoba has not been treated fairly.

**CFB Shilo
All-Party Position**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary. Given that I really did not get a

terribly satisfactory answer from the First Minister, I will move on to the issue of the all-party position on the military in Manitoba and ask for an update from the First Minister. I was under the understanding that there might have been a meeting last week, which did not take place.

* (13:45)

Can the First Minister indicate—I think he indicated in his first answer that the issue would be on the table—will he be putting forward a very strong all-party position, to the First Minister, and see any indication of what the response might be from the federal government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would like to thank all members of the Legislature for participating and contributing to the all-party position and consensus we have arrived at. It was my desire to meet last week with the federal Defence Minister and the federal Foreign Affairs Minister. That meeting we were not able to establish because of the federal Defence Minister's unavailability. We thought it was important to have that there, and I would have preferred to have the all-party delegation meet first and meet with the Prime Minister when he was coming to Winnipeg today. Regrettably, the order of the meetings has been established, again, by somebody else, I might say.

I will be raising it with the Prime Minister today, and we will as an all-party delegation. I will alert the Prime Minister to the fact that the all-party group is scheduled now to meet with the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Minister of National Defence on Thursday in Ottawa.

**First Nations Casinos
Public Consultations**

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are demanding public consultations and referendums prior to the expansion of gambling in the province of Manitoba. This is contrary to the OCN who are saying they want to have their new casino in The Pas open by December. I would like to remind the First Minister that it was he that stated, and I quote: before we go any further, before we expand gaming, let us listen to the public, let us give them the power.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister responsible for gaming today is: Will he assure Manitobans that public consultations and referendums will be held immediately before the expansion of First Nations gaming in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I thank the Member for the question. Let me just state absolutely clearly that we will not force a casino on any community that does not want one, first of all. Secondly, I just want to state that we have certainly approached this matter in partnership with the AMC. We continue to do so, and we will certainly continue to address any concerns in partnership as well.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister responsible for gaming to explain to Manitobans why he seems so reluctant to hold referendums and public consultations in contrast to the Nadeau report which states that they will listen to the views of the public.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you again for the question. This is coming from a member who is part and parcel of a former government that expanded gaming beyond—it was just unbelievable the amount of expansion that took place with regard to gaming without any consultation whatsoever. Regent and McPhillips, they just steam-rolled through it and put them in place. Now certainly, as I mentioned, we will not force a casino on any community that does not want one.

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the Minister responsible for gaming if he would stand by the First Minister's (Mr. Doer) statement, and I quote, from March 5, 1997, where he said: "I suggest to the government strongly they must . . . have referendums and plebiscites in communities across Manitoba and let the people speak out about these massive amounts of revenue and the social costs." Will the Minister stand behind that statement made by the First Minister?

Mr. Lemieux: With regard to plebiscites, we believe that consultation is necessary, but we will leave it up to local governments to decide what form is appropriate. Certainly there are different means of acquiring opinions from their

constituents, and they are a duly elected and responsible government. It is up to them to decide what kind of public consultation they will accept.

First Nations Casinos Alternate Sites

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): The First Minister has said that the Swan Lake First Nation casino proposal in Headingley is all but dead. However, the casino project may be moved down the road to St. François Xavier. Given that the selection committee based its recommendations on proposals that contain specific site locations, can the Minister responsible for gaming clarify if Swan Lake First Nation has government approval to develop a casino in a location other than Headingley?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I thank the Member, first of all, for the question. All the proposals that were put forward to the selection committee were based on specific sites, and Swan Lake's specific site was Headingley.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister then advise if the four other First Nations would have government's approval to locate elsewhere, other than the original site referred to by the selection committee?

* (13:50)

Mr. Lemieux: I am not sure if the Member opposite was expecting a different answer, but I will repeat it. The proposals that were put in to the selection committee were specific and in general were site specific. Brandon, for example, mentioned the R.M. of Sifton and Brandon. Other proposals were very specific as to their locations.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask if the Minister can advise this House, then, when the implementation committee will advise this minister and this House when the site selections will be finalized so that all Manitobans will know.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you for the question. Just with regard to the next step in the process, it is a

long process, and there is an implementation team or committee that has to be put in place, and certainly they will be proceeding with regard to the recommendations made by the selection committee.

First Nations Casinos Implementation Committee

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): We have heard this minister and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs mention the fact of an implementation committee that is to be established to facilitate the establishment of the First Nations casinos. I know that a lot of First Nations communities and other communities are wanting to know who is on this implementation committee.

My question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is: Can he tell this House who will be involved with this implementation committee, and who will be the representatives on this committee?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): It is a very difficult question to answer at this time because we have not identified the individuals; however, it is in partnership with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Mr. Reimer: I am kind of baffled.

An Honourable Member: Like all Manitobans.

Mr. Reimer: Like all Manitobans are baffled. We have heard the idea of a selection committee and an implementation committee, the implementation committee, as referred to, that will set these casinos in motion. We now hear that there is no implementation committee.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I am wondering if you could ask the Member to formulate a question.

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

Mr. Reimer: Oh, no, I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind the Honourable Member that *Beauchesne's* Citation 409.2 advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

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

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for going into detail about the bafflegab that was brought forth by the other side.

*(13:55)

My question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Can he explain why there is no implementation team already established? It would seem that this was the natural progression from the selection committee's recommendations that there will now be an implementation team. Who will be on that implementation team, and will he tell us who the proponents will be?

Mr. Robison: As we have indicated, this was the first step, the selection committee's work. That was a first and very important step in making Aboriginal people feel a part of this province. The next step, of course, is the implementation committee, and that will be done in partnership with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. There will be two representatives from the AMC, two representatives from the Province of Manitoba and an independent chairperson is the arrangement that is being discussed at this time. Beyond that, we do not know the names of these individuals that will form the implementation committee.

Mr. Reimer: My question then to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Can he confirm that Mr. Eugene Kostyra will be one of the members on that selection committee?

Mr. Robison: I do not know this gentleman that well that is being mentioned, Mr. Kostyra. I know of his work, and I understand he is a very capable individual; however, I want to indicate to the Member that, no, he is not being considered to be a part of the implementation committee.

First Nations Casinos Economic Impact

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the impact doubling gambling in Manitoba will have on the current Crown gaming revenue is a question this government has been trying to avoid. The First Minister denies there will be any loss; the minister of gaming says there will be; the minister of lotteries says there might be. The Government needs to be reminded that this revenue helps to pay for health care, education and social programs.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister of gaming advise the House if his government has initiated any economic impact studies to determine the effect that the increased gambling will have on the Crown revenue?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I thank the Member for the question. As I think I mentioned to the Member last week or to another member last week, we do not see this as a loss of revenue but a sharing of revenue. But let me point out to the Member opposite that the suggestion that the Member is making that we are doubling gambling in this province is entirely false. If all five casino proposals are approved to operate in casinos, we would see a 15% increase in the numbers of VLTs in this province, 15 percent, not 50 percent.

* (14:00)

I would like also to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the total number of electronic games in the province today is 7624. The proposed number for aboriginal casinos, First Nations casinos is a total of 1277. Again, it does not sound like doubling to me. I might also—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prior to recognizing the Honourable Member, I would just like to remind all honourable members of *Beauchesne's* Citation 168: When rising to preserve order or to give a ruling, the Speaker must always be heard in silence. I would just like to offer that to all the members.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Beauchesne's 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member I believe has exceeded all three.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, the Minister was putting information on the record which was important to be placed there because it is the responsibility of all members, when they bring information to this House, to make sure that the information is accurate. The Minister was responding and fulfilling her responsibility. It is unfortunate the Opposition did not fulfill their responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I would like to remind the Honourable Minister that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should be brief.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister had sat down. To conclude her answer—have you concluded your answer?

Ms. McGifford: No, I have one more point if I might make it, Mr. Speaker, and that is simply to say that the 15 percent that I spoke about is quite generous, given the definite possibility that all the casino proposals will not result in operational casinos. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Speaker, I guess I cannot be thankful for the answer. Can the Minister of Finance advise if the revenue-projection rates found within his budget take into account a potential \$30-million reduction in Crown gaming revenue?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The revenue projections for Lotteries this year take into account any potential impacts of gaming with respect to Aboriginal peoples for the following year.

Round Table on Sustainable Development Premier's Membership

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. For many years Manitoba has had a round table dealing with environmental concerns, and though it changed names in 1998, the membership was virtually identical before and after the name change. Though the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) chaired this for a short period, for the majority of its life it was chaired by the Premier.

I ask the Premier: When will he step to the plate, chair the round table and name the rest of the members?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) has stated clearly in this House that we will have an announcement shortly on the round table and the other advisory committees that the Government has.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that, when we in government act, we act through all our departments on sustainability. Last week we announced an outreach program for the livestock industry. Included in that is a change that will be outlined by our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) to require the back end of a barn production, i.e., the sewage and the lagoon operation, to be considered at the same time as a municipality will zone a barn.

We are dealing with the east side of Lake Winnipeg on request for the boreal forest allocations. We are trying to determine the existing fibre in that area. Everything we are doing in government is sustainable. I see that as my role as premier, not just to chair an exercise for purposes of public relations but to make sure that we have a balance of sustainability all throughout government.

Sustainable Development Strategy Legislative Requirements

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary for the Premier. Since The Sustainable Development Act mandates that the Government provide a

sustainable development strategy by July 1 of the year 2000, will the Premier, who should be chairing the round table, assure this House that he will present this strategy by July 1 of this year?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are working on considerable responses, a number of comprehensive responses on the sustainable development strategy. Before one is to judge whether we are able to make a deadline, let us judge us by our results.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier. Manitobans await July 1. We hope you will provide the assurance that you will be ready with the full strategy.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we hope also today, with the Prime Minister, to discuss some of the impacts of cuts that have been made in '95, '96 and '97 to water-quality monitoring from Environment Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do. We are looking at legislation to prohibit the bulk water removal from the Hudson Bay watershed. We are playing catch-up to deal with some initiatives that have been made by North Dakota on the Devils Lake diversion and the North Dakota state water act that would move water from the Missouri River watershed across to the Hudson Bay watershed.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) has not, as members opposite have suggested, provided a kind of absolute approval to the proposals on the east side until we can determine the sustainability. We are now requiring the extraction of water and the disposal of water for the proposed Schneider's plant go to a full environmental assessment. We are going to recharge the environmental commission, something that has not been done for a number of years.

First Nations Casinos Tourism Potential

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Recently the Minister responsible for Tourism was asked questions about First Nations casinos and the cultivation of tourism opportunities. My

question is: Can the Minister explain what criteria was used to determine which proposals had greater potential for promoting tourism and hospitality?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): When I answered this question last week I made reference to material given to the House by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) who assured us that aboriginal casinos would only encourage tourism in the province because, although there were 600 buses coming, he thought there was room for at least 1000. So my response to this member today would be that the aboriginal casinos, we expect, will encourage visitors to the province, tourism to the province.

Mr. Tweed: Will the Minister confirm that the tourism potential of a casino where there is heavy traffic flow is far greater than that of a casino located elsewhere?

Ms. McGifford: Casinos throughout the province draw a different clientele, draw tourists for very different reasons. For example, a casino at The Pas would draw people that a casino in the southern part of the province may not. We know that Manitoba is famous for its excellent fishing and hunting in the northern parts of the province, so, for example, it would seem to me logical that individuals may come to the province for fishing and hunting in northern Manitoba and may spend some time at a northern casino.

So it is a complex question, and the answers can only be complex.

Mr. Tweed: I agree with the Minister that each part of the province is specific and maybe we are trying to force things where they should not necessarily be.

Can the Minister responsible for Tourism explain whether the proposed casinos will attract significant new tourist dollars or in fact merely recycle local dollars?

*(14:10)

Ms. McGifford: I can assure the Member opposite that members from Tourism assisted

the selection committee and that those concerns were addressed in the work that the committee did.

Nursing Profession Legislation Proclamation

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): On July 14, 1999, royal assent was given to The Registered Nurses Act, The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act and The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, and this House supported each of those bills unanimously. In fact, the Health Minister said then that he, and I quote, looks forward to its speedy passage and completion in this House.

Can the Health Minister tell nurses, who are anxiously waiting for his response, when he plans to proclaim each of these acts into law?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): As I explained to the assembled nurses at the MRN convention that I addressed, at the subsequent LPN convention that I addressed, and prior to that at the RPN convention that I addressed, we are reviewing the regulations with these organizations. I said that the acts would be proclaimed soon.

Mrs. Driedger: Will this minister tell Manitoba nurses today that he is going to do everything in his power to ensure that these acts will be proclaimed immediately, considering that these regulations have been ready since before Christmas? That was six months ago, and they have been sitting on his desk for six months. What is he waiting for?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as is often the case with some of the preambles and postambles entered into by members opposite, she is factually wrong.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask this minister why he is not proclaiming these acts when in fact the nurses' associations have informed me, and I am choosing to believe them, that these regulations have all been prepared. MARN had published theirs in their nursing journal. I know that these regulations are ready to go, and I am wondering what this minister is doing by sitting on them. Why is he not proclaiming them?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the Member is factually wrong. In fact, there have been correspondence and discussions going on between our department and that of some of the associations.

I want the Member and all Manitobans to know that we are focusing on the five-point nursing plan, something that had not been done in this province for over a decade, that would see diploma-trained nurses back in the workforce, that would see \$3 million worth of funding go to education for nurses to be upgraded, that would see recruitment and retention.

We wanted nurses back in Manitoba after 10 years of drought and neglect by the previous government, and that has been a priority of ours.

Hog Industry Environmental Licensing

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Currently they are undertaking further review of livestock operations in Manitoba, and the hog producers of this province have some of the most up-to-date and current regulations that have recently been imposed.

I would ask if this minister is considering ultimately putting hog barns in front of the Clean Environment Commission.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cummings: That would mean that she is either intending to use the current method of approval or that she has alternate approval methods that she intends to use. I wonder if the latter is the case.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we know that the livestock industry is expanding in Manitoba. Given the low grain prices, high input costs, farmers are looking for alternatives to their farming operations. One of the options that they are looking at is increased live production. We anticipate that there will be more feedlots in Manitoba, more hog barns, and other varieties of livestock.

We want to ensure that expansion takes place in a sustainable way, and that is why we have appointed a three-person committee to give the people of Manitoba an opportunity to give their views on the growth of this industry in Manitoba.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has just reiterated what we have been saying in this House for the last half decade.

I wonder if she can put at ease the concerns of producers that are being raised as they now go into another round of review where the public input—and that is welcomed, but what will the opportunity be for them to demonstrate the sustainability of the current regulations that they are operating under?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we have appointed a three-person committee that will be listening to people about the growth of the livestock industry. I am very confident and sure that the producers in Manitoba are going to participate because I have had discussions with them. They are going to be talking about the existing regulations and the changes that they think might have to be made.

Livestock Industry Report—Background Information

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): In the same vein that the previous member asked questions, I would like to refer my question to the Minister of Agriculture. She tabled a few days ago a discussion paper on the livestock stewardship act. We congratulate her for wanting to discuss the industry with Manitobans; however, she makes reference in her paper to The Netherlands, North Carolina and other countries in the world where livestock issues have become a problem. Can she table for us today the technical data that she refers to in her discussion paper referring to North Carolina and some of the difficulties that they have run into, and/or The Netherlands? If she can provide us with the technical data that would demonstrate her statements in that paper, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, those are very

good questions, and we have outlined the other countries that have large livestock operations. The Member knows we are in Estimates and that is a technical question and I would not have details at my fingers right now, but I would certainly invite him to raise that question in Estimates. But, when we are having this discussion, we know that in other countries there have been mistakes made in the livestock industry, and we want to look at what other countries are doing to ensure that we do not make the same mistakes here.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that answer.

Public Consultations

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I wonder if the Minister would be able to tell us what the true emphasis of the discussion paper is going to be and whether she intends to draft new regulations and/or new legislation in response to the responses that she is going to receive through the public discussions. The second part of the question is: Could the Minister inform us where and when the meetings are going to be held in regard to the livestock initiative?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I would certainly be precluding the hearings and meetings that the committee is going to be holding if I indicated that this government was going to be making some changes. So we want the committees to hear from Manitobans and from producers, and from there decisions will be made. But I also want to tell the Member that we will be announcing the meeting dates within this week, and we will then also announce the locations of where meetings will be held in Manitoba.

Mr. Jack Penner: In regard to this and in regard to how welcome the Minister is to public debate and discussion on issues, I wonder if she is going to have some discussions and debate with her Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) to reflect on the fact that The Wildlife Act or Bill 5 that the Minister of Conservation has proposed to put before the House, whether she is going to also insist that those kinds of discussions need to be held in regard to Bill 5 to deal with the other

issues in agriculture—I understand that Agriculture is responsible for the bison industry, for the elk industry—and whether we are going to have those same kinds of discussions on that bill.

* (14:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how those people operated when they were in government, but on this side of the House this government is very inclusive and we continue to have discussions. In fact, our hearings on the livestock initiative is a committee of three departments: Conservation, Intergovernmental, and Agriculture and Food. So we are very inclusive. With respect to the issue of the bison industry, we are in consultation with the public. The Member is well aware that this is enabling legislation, and when the legislation is passed, the Minister of Conservation has indicated that there will be discussion. We have had discussion with the people in the bison industry; we will continue that discussion.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

During Oral Questions on May 30, 2000, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) concerning the words "trying to mislead this House" spoken by the Honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen). The Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau) also spoke to the point of order. I took the matter under advisement in order to peruse Hansard.

I thank both House Leaders for their contributions to the point of order.

Previous Manitoba Speakers have ruled that it is out of order to imply that a member is attempting to or has the intention of misleading the House. On July 15, 1987, Madam Speaker Phillips ruled that it was out of order to state that an honourable member knows he is misleading the House. On November 29, 1988, Mr. Speaker Rocan ruled the words "choose to mislead" out

of order, and on October 30, 1990, he ruled the words "attempt to mislead" out of order. On May 28, 1997, the words "attempting to mislead" were voluntarily withdrawn.

As was referenced by House of Commons Speaker Lamoureux on March 7, 1974, it is not unparliamentary to suggest that another member has made representations or has misled the House. What is unparliamentary, and what has been ruled on very often, is to suggest that it was intentional or willful—that kind of concept.

Based on the Manitoba precedents cited, I am ruling that the words "trying to mislead" are out of order because of implication of intent to mislead. I am therefore respectfully requesting that the Honourable Member for Fort Whyte withdraw the words "trying to mislead."

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I unconditionally withdraw those remarks, and I would also like to apologize to the House and to the Minister. If during the heat of debate I left the impression that I thought he was deliberately putting information on the record that was not true, I want to make it clear that that was not my point, and, as I said, I unconditionally withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Honourable Member for the withdrawal.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mathias Colomb School

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I was privileged on Saturday, June 2, to attend the grand opening of Sakastew School located within Mathias Colomb Cree Nation also known as Pukatawagan. Chief Shirley Castel, the council, the elders and indeed all of the members of Mathias Colomb proudly hosted numerous visitors, including federal representatives Minister Robert Nault and Bev Desjarlais, M.P. for the Churchill constituency. Representatives from the Manitoba Legislature included the Honourable Oscar Lathlin and the Honourable Steve Ashton, as well as myself. Several chiefs and grand chiefs were also in attendance including MKO Grand Chief Frances Flett. At the school opening ceremony, elder

Dominique Hart presided at the opening prayer. The local drum group and singers added excitement and colour to the ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation should be very proud of Sakastew School. This ultramodern facility plus 14 new teacherages cost almost \$20 million. The school accommodates 640 students from nursery to Grade 12. Sakastew School boasts, among other things, 21 regular classrooms, three kindergarten rooms, five resource rooms, two rooms each for science, computers and home economics, also a business education room, an art room, a full gymnasium, a multipurpose room, a health room, a library, an industrial arts area, a teachers' lounge and storage facilities.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Chamber are delighted at the fact that such a fine educational facility has been built at Pukatawagan. I salute the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation for recognizing the importance of education in building a brighter future. May the new school be the symbol of that new and brighter future for the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation specifically and for all northern communities generally. Thank you.

Public Service Week

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize June 11 to 17 as Public Service Week in Manitoba, something the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) should have done today in this House.

This time is set aside to celebrate public servants and their contributions to our society. National Public Service Week was introduced by the federal government in 1992 upon the passage of Bill C-328 in the House of Commons. It set out the third week of June to recognize the value of services provided by public servants from all jurisdictions. Since that time, Manitoba has commemorated the week annually with various events and activities.

I am most appreciative of the essential role played in our society by those in the public service from health care and education to policing and justice, to defence and recreation services. Public servants allow our country the

great quality and quantity of life we enjoy today. Sometimes I think we forget the value of the contributions made by these individuals, taking for granted the professional and competent services that we are accorded.

This week gives us pause to reflect on exactly these things and thank the public servants for their efforts. I trust each of the members of the House will join me in recognizing these men and women. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

United Church of Canada

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 75th anniversary of the United Church of Canada.

The United Church was formed at an inaugural worship service on June 10, 1925, in the Mutual Street Arena in Toronto. At that time it was an amalgamation of all Congregational churches, all Methodist churches, and the majority of Presbyterian churches in Canada and also numerous Union congregations in western Canada.

We, as a church, have had an interesting history. We were part of the Social Gospel movement that built settlement houses for ministry amongst immigrants in many cities across Canada, of which All Peoples Mission in Winnipeg was a part. We have been an outspoken church, something not always appreciated by governments or the private sector, especially when it came to our involvement in social and economic justice issues. As has often been said, we feel an obligation to not only comfort the afflicted, but to afflict the comfortable.

We have changed a great deal as a church since 1925, when we were predominantly an Anglo-Saxon church. Since that time, we have welcomed many new congregations, particularly in the Chinese and Korean communities and others, and many self-governing First Nations congregations as well. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive church.

There are parts of our history of which we are not proud. For example, we were part of the assimilationist policies of Canadian society. As a

result, in 1986 we issued an apology to Aboriginal people for our role in denying Aboriginal people their cultural identity. Of course, there is the ongoing issue of residential schools, which we are working hard to resolve.

May we go forward into the 21st century knowledgeable about our history, involved in the life work of our—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

* (14:30)

United Way Days of Caring

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, June 7 to 10 marked the United Way's first Winnipeg-wide Days of Caring.

Over those four days, over 150 volunteers from across Winnipeg worked together to benefit children, youth, parents, seniors, and people with disabilities. All in all, 13 different projects took place throughout the days of caring with employees of 16 Winnipeg companies involved in these activities.

The United Way Days of Caring program connects a community-minded company or organization with a human care agency that needs help for a day or more to complete a project. The business can provide funding materials, employee labour to help an agency undertake projects ranging from painting, renovations, neighbourhood cleanups to organizing and holding a special event.

It is a great way for companies to invest in their communities and employees are able to forge new bonds with other Winnipeggers. The men and women who volunteered their time, painted buildings, planted flowers, helped renovate buildings, cleaned recreation areas and treated people to free service during the United Way Days of Caring, through their efforts they helped beautify many different areas of Winnipeg and provided a lift to people in our community.

The over 150 volunteers who donated their time and effort exemplify the spirit of

volunteerism that our city and our province is renowned for. I would like to commend all of the businesses and volunteers who took part in activities during the United Way Days of Caring. Through volunteering to help make Winnipeg a stronger, healthier community for all its citizens, I would also like to commend the Winnipeg United Way for co-ordinating this important campaign.

On behalf of my colleagues, I congratulate all of those involved, in particular the co-chairs Gail Loewen and Val Betker, in this year's Days of Caring for their hard work. Thank you.

Sergeant Tommy Prince Army Cadet Corps

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, Sunday, June 4, the MP for Winnipeg Centre, the MLA for Radisson and the MLA for Wellington attended the Sergeant Tommy Prince Army Cadet Corps first annual parade at the Freight House. The Corps was established this spring to provide opportunities for youth, to learn self-discipline and leadership skills through a variety of activities.

The youth cadet corps is named after Sergeant Thomas George Prince, Canada's most highly decorated aboriginal soldier who received the prestigious Military Medal and U.S. Silver Star for exemplary service in both the Second World War and the Korean War.

Few Manitobans are aware of the bitter sacrifices endured by aboriginal soldiers. Service often resulted legally in the loss of treaty status and land rights. Many aboriginal veterans returned home only to face alienation from their bands, and worse, discrimination from non-aboriginal community groups.

In response to the oppressive treatment, Sergeant Tommy Prince began to fight racism as a spokesperson for his people and to advocate issues like northern education, fishing and trapping rights. Tommy Prince Cadet Chairperson, Don Mackey, and other area residents recognized this and helped organize the youth cadet corps and the importance in providing positive role models for aboriginal youths of today.

The Tommy Prince Army Cadet Corps program gives our youth unique opportunities to gain confidence and other socially useful skills. The cadet corps provides desirable alternatives to the hopelessness and the shadow of pain and death lurking in our Winnipeg streets sometimes. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Motion agreed to.

* (14:50)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

When the Committee last sat, it had been agreed to have a global discussion on the Estimates of the Department of Justice with line items to be passed once the questioning and discussion is completed. Is that still the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My colleague the Member for Portage la Prairie would like to finish some of his questions and my colleague as well from Charleswood also has some others. So I hope to have them in one after the other this afternoon to be able to deal with their questions, and then I have a few more. I am hoping we can complete the Estimates either by 6 p.m. today or very early tomorrow. So just to give the Minister and his staff a sense of timing. I have a few more issues I would like to explore

a little bit, but I am going to turn things over to my colleagues, Mr. Chair.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I would like to carry on with the last question that I had opportunity to pose to the Minister Thursday last. That was in regard to the ageing facility for women's corrections in Portage. The Minister alluded that a number of options were being considered at this time, and that is the way the Minister concluded his remarks on Thursday. I wondered if the Minister would be able to elaborate on the considerations that he alluded to, and being that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is here he might want to also ask the question as to whether or not the upgrading of this facility is in this year's budget.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I have not been presented with any options yet. Until such time as there are some options to have been considered it would be premature. But at this time I cannot even anticipate what all of the options would be. So perhaps we can revisit this down the road.

Mr. Faurshou: I do want to leave the Minister with the thought, on behalf of the personnel at the women's correctional facility in Portage la Prairie, that this is a very dated facility and that, with the two considerations of overcrowding as well as inmates that are of a more violent orientation, our true concerns are for the personnel at the facilities. The consideration for options to address both of these concerns is definitely wanting. I hope the Minister will have time in the not-too-distant future to really, truly consider these concerns and hopefully address them.

I would like now to move on to the Agassiz Youth Centre, which is located in Portage la Prairie. There was a new cottage opened this past year to address the consideration of more violent offenders in that facility. My understanding is that this facility is one that was very much wanted by the personnel and the Corrections staff.

I wondered if the Minister could possibly give me any further information at this time as to

how that particular facility is addressing the concerns that were held?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am advised that reports from the institution indicate that the new facility is fulfilling its intended purpose and that there is general satisfaction with how it has been operating. No significant glitches have been discovered, I understand. If the Member has any information, any concerns, I would be certainly willing to bring those to the attention of staff, and we can get responses.

Mr. Faurshou: No, I have not heard of any concerns, only commentary to the effect that they are very glad to now have that facility available to them.

The latest contact I have had with staff was involving placards in hand, making note that the wages were less than satisfactory, and wanted this member to convey to the Minister that, regardless of where within the Ministry of Justice individuals are employed, their stipend would like to be reviewed.

Further to the Agassiz Youth Centre's operation, I would like to ask the Minister: Is he considering additional programming to the Agassiz Youth Centre which would potentially offer further job experience to the inmates there so as to ease them, once released from the judicial system, that they would have a greater opportunity to be placed within the community?

* (15:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: The main focus of the programming at Agassiz is on education. There is a trades component to that, including now some emphasis on pork processing or meat cutting.

If there are any other particular questions, we could provide answers to the Member, but he should be aware that one of the philosophies is to ensure that a youth has the skills to carry on as a productive and nonoffending member of society. Part and parcel of that goes with it the opportunities that are needed to participate in a modern economy. There is an emphasis increasingly so on newer technologies.

Mr. Faurichou: Well, I appreciate the Minister's answer. The particular employment opportunities that one would experience anywhere in and out of the system is based on education. Without question, one must build a strong foundation so that one has the ability to learn. I understand the mandate of the Agassiz correctional facility is in fact to upgrade those individuals so that they have that ability to learn. However, one would like to couple that with some initial orientation, if I might say, with job opportunities that would perhaps present themselves to the individuals once they are released from these facilities. I understand that opportunities are available on the farm as well as in the kitchen and the laundry.

I would like to bring to the Minister's attention, as I did with the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton), the ongoing maintenance of the facilities that are carried out by personnel employed by Government Services. These personnel have experienced a reduction in available manpower. I understand over the years the complement at the Agassiz Youth Centre has been reduced from eight to four. All individuals at the present time at the Agassiz Youth Centre are in fact trade professionals with journeyman's papers in various capacities.

It was expressed that these individuals work, and the amount of work that they could undertake at the facility would be greatly enhanced if they had with them an apprenticeship or individuals who would assist in helping out with the daily maintenance activities on the facility. However, once in discussion with the individuals it was understood that they would have to have an upgrading of their own stature within the ranks of the civil service so they would have the recognition of being able to in fact teach. I am wondering whether the Minister is aware of this certification that is not presently in hand and whether the Minister would be in fact encouraging of these individuals to attempt to provide for this requirement.

Mr. Mackintosh: As I said in the answer to the earlier question, one of the main focuses of the institution is education and preparing the young people who leave there to be productive and nonoffending members of society. The focus

therefore, in terms of the educational programming itself, is to ensure that there is an elevation of basic skills. The concern is that moving into apprenticeship education and putting in place the changes necessary to focus on that would be premature and that we should be ensuring that when they leave the institutions they have the ability perhaps later and in the community to engage in one of the apprentice-ships. As well, the other focus of the programming, aside from basic education, is to help the youth deal with the problems that often underlie their acting out or their offending behaviour.

It should also be noted though that the time that is available to these youth in the institution is valuable time and that the days are full for these residents. Adding on this kind of program, given the concerns that I just expressed earlier about basics in education and dealing with personal issues, suggests very strongly that that model may not work at this point.

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate the Minister's thoughts. However, coming from an educational background and understanding the varied levels of accomplishment within the contingency of young people at the Agassiz Youth Centre leaves a great deal of latitude as to the opportunity for education. I will stress with the Minister that, with even those persons who are significantly lacking in the tools that are garnered through primary education, you can only keep the attention span of those individuals for so long, whether it be for a five-hour period like a normal school day period. Even though they require a lot of upgrading, the attention span and the ability to continue to learn for an extended period of time throughout the day is taxing, to say the least, to these individuals.

That is why I suggest, Mr. Minister, that you truly explore other opportunities for education. Education comes in multifaceted areas, and one can really enhance that education if they get their hands dirty. This is what I suggest that, if one has the opportunity to learn their reading and mathematics, geography, et cetera, in the classroom, one still has to have that practical experience so that when the individuals are released into society they have some capability of being able to garner employment so that this

cycle is not repeated. It may be so minor as to understanding the operations of a lawnmower, or perhaps how to rinse a paint brush and apply a coat of paint. It is very basic education in order to enter the workplace.

I would appreciate the Minister's response in this regard, because I think he appreciates where I am coming from in this, that one cannot sit all day long at a desk and continue to learn with the necessary intensity for an extended period of time without a variety.

* (15:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: Was the Member suggesting locksmithing? Moving along, if the Member is left with the impression that the inmates are sitting for most of the day, I do not think that can be borne out by the routine. But we would be pleased to provide the Member with the routine plan for the inmates. As well, I know I have had a private conversation with the Member, and perhaps over the next two or three months we could do an in-depth tour of the facility. I know the Member has some interest—and rightly so—as do his constituents, in how the facility operates. I think it would be important in the area of public education and insights that I get a hold of the Member at some point, and we can tour the facility.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the Minister's remarks, and I will be looking forward to touring the facility and garnering a greater understanding and appreciation for the program that is in existence. I do know that the education that is being provided there is not just limited to school topics, that a great deal of time is spent on elevating individual self-esteem, so that those individuals, once they re-enter society, are not so easily led as they were previously. So there are other components, and I did not want to leave the Minister with the impression that they are in a classroom setting all day long. I was just wanting to impress upon him that there is opportunity for expanding the programming so as to garner further options to those individuals there who show the aptitude to learning skills that are applicable to a trade that would assist them once they re-enter society.

I do want, though, to raise the concerns insofar as that the Agassiz Youth Centre had the

personnel take the individuals that are incarcerated there out into the community to work for various employers up until just a short time ago when there was a decision made that, if they were going to be employed by persons other than government, they qualified for the minimum wage, which, for the most part, is a good decision. However, essentially it terminated any and all employment offered to the individuals. I believe the Minister can appreciate that, within a grouping of 10, 12, 14 young men in a work crew, there are numerous individuals that do not profess to work with enthusiasm and energy, even though there are a number within those work crews that work very, very well and are entitled to that level of remuneration. However, as a whole, when the work crew went to do a particular job for an independent employer, the work did not qualify for a minimum-wage type of remuneration; hence, basically, no further employment opportunities were offered.

I might just say that we were one of the employers, and regular employers, of individuals of the Agassiz Youth Centre that were employed on our farm, and in Portage la Prairie, where we shipped processed goods in packages, 25-kilo to 45-kilo sizes. When we were loading and unloading boxcars, it suited them very well. In fact, I will go on to say that the personnel at Agassiz Youth Centre were very appreciative of this labour-intensive work and, once they returned from our farm, were certain these individuals were going to sleep through the night. They were not going anywhere because they were exhausted. However, this now is not an option, so what we are ending up with right now is that these individuals, if they are not going to be receiving the minimum wage, are limited now to working for government.

What we have come to appreciate now is that there are few governments that have lines in their budgets in order to provide for supervision. So the individuals now with the Agassiz Youth Centre, where many evenings were spent in the employ of various farms in the area, are now looking—and I will not say totally wanting—for activities, because there has been some address of this. But I am wondering whether or not the Minister will undertake a true consideration of

the use of the time for these individuals in the capacity of servicing the public.

* (15:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: The main issue, of course, in assessing the deployment of offenders in the community is the area of security and the risk posed by individuals. From that point, assuming that there is a level of risk, which is manageable, we certainly are open to listening to the Member. If he would like us to have another look at the community service regime, we would be prepared to do that; but, again, we would emphasize that risk management and the security of the community are first and foremost. If there has been a significant reduction in community service, in the MLA's community, in particular, over the last number of years, that is an area that we could look at and see if there could be a positive change. We also have to, of course, bear in mind that deploying offenders in the community should not take the place of others who are gainfully employed, nor should it be to deploy individuals at no cost to other entrepreneurs, for example, who could take advantage of that one as though slave-type labour. I am sure the Member appreciates those considerations.

As long as the Member would like us to look at that, we certainly would be prepared to facilitate some discussions and look to see if there are options for some change.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the Minister's response. Without question, security for the community in which the individuals are working is first and foremost. I might just mention that since the arrival of the RCMP K9 unit, the number of attempted escapes is significantly reduced. The K9 unit has been extremely effective in bringing back individuals that have sought to garner their freedom prior to their time spent. So right now the community is very, very appreciative of that particular work of the dog man and German shepherd established in Portage.

However, I do want to stress with the Minister that just a number of years ago, a very short time ago, the individuals from the Agassiz Youth Centre were employed through the City of

Portage la Prairie to clean up Garriochs Creek. It is a small waterway within the city limits that had become poorly attended to, and they did an outstanding job. In fact, so much so that the city declared this a green area and has since named the Garriochs Creek area as Garriochs Park.

There were significant accolades provided to the young people of Agassiz Youth Centre for their outstanding work, and to have those individuals up on the dedication of this park, you could just see the pride in each one of those individuals that they had accomplished something that would stand for a great deal of time, that they would be known for, and that they could bring relatives or friends to show what they accomplished, because this park is now truly well tended to, an area within Portage la Prairie and the plaque that is dedicated there makes mention of their contributions.

This is what I am hoping that can be furthered, because there are other opportunities throughout the area for an undertaking that will carry on in time recognizing the contributions that one has made to the area and emphasizing the fact that these individuals are incarcerated for a reason. They have in fact infringed upon society and broken society's law, and so therefore society should benefit in some capacity from these individuals that have been incarcerated, not only at the Agassiz Youth Centre but that of the women's correctional facility as well in Portage la Prairie. The community requests that this debt to society be in some fashion acknowledged and contributions made to paying down that debt. Does the Minister have any comment in that respect?

Mr. Mackintosh: I just think it is a very important part of changing behaviour for the better. Having offenders make up for what they have done, I think it is critical. In certain circumstances where the victims are prepared to participate, I think that there should be a making right of a wrong to the victim, in particular, but second of all to the community at large. I would also remind the Member that it is very useful in community justice programming for offenders to improve neighbourhoods and communities by those kinds of programs that the Member describes. I certainly would urge any youth

justice committee or other community justice initiative to ensure that the offenders are in programs of community work and community improvement for the same kind of reasons that the Member described for those who are incarcerated.

But we certainly are prepared to look at how incarcerated offenders can pay off what I guess is sometimes described as a debt to society, but as well to make right or wrong to a greater extent by community work. As well, I think over the course of the mandate, the Member will notice that there is an increased emphasis on community justice. I am confident that we can build on the initiatives that Portage la Prairie has helped establish with the community justice, so that the MLA's constituency is all the better for it. I believe that the offender's behaviour will be the better for it, and all of us in our safety will be the better for it.

Mr. Faurshou: The Minister is quite correct in saying that Portage la Prairie is leading in the area of youth justice committees and to lessening the burden on the court systems. In Portage la Prairie, a great deal of use is made of the food bank and those persons putting together hampers, doing delivery and understanding the community has needs and to be very appreciative of their own stead in life because there are others that have a lot less in this world.

I also want to ask the Minister whether there is going to be a formal understanding put forward from his department to the local governments, such as the rural municipality of Portage la Prairie, the city of Portage la Prairie so that the senior administration in both those governments understand the policies, because these policies have changed. I do not believe that because there is a lacking in communication that there is not this two-way working capacity at the present time.

Mr. Mackintosh: If the Member is suggesting that the municipality or Portage la Prairie could put together projects, for example, and bring them to the attention of, I would suggest, the Assistant Deputy Minister or my office, we would be pleased to hear it and take it from there. I wonder, is that what the Member is getting at? We certainly would be open to any

consultations or advice from the municipal corporations.

Mr. Faurshou: I really appreciate the Minister's response because that is precisely what I was hoping the Minister would say that there could be dialogue in this regard between the local municipal government and the correction facilities. I do know that because of the signage alongside the Trans-Canada Highway the women's correctional facility is responsible for adopting a highway and maintaining the highway in a litter-free state. That is greatly appreciated, most certainly; however, I do not see that capacity by the Agassiz Youth Centre. But, most certainly, it is appreciated that the women's correctional facility staff and inmates have taken this initiative to work in this regard.

* (15:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: I want to remind the Member that, if he wanted to talk to any of his contacts in the City of Portage la Prairie, for example, he remind them, though, that before any expectations were raised about different programming, the analysis would really centre around the risk analysis of the offenders in question and the project itself, and, second of all, the concern that inmate or resident participation would not supplant the work of paid employees in the community.

Mr. Faurshou: I understand the Minister's comments, and without question one would not want to displace individuals that could garner employment from doing the various activities around the communities. However, please understand that there are individuals within both facilities that are nearing the end of their term within those facilities and are considered less likely to want for an early exit from those facilities. So we have to recognize that not all of the residents in those facilities are availing to these types of activities. But just to understand that the community, when it saw these individuals out working in the parks and alongside the roadways, was appreciative on both sides. One, there was some long-lasting improvement to their community, but also in fact recognizing that they are paying back to society

perhaps some of that debt that, in most minds, is owing by those that break the law.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am advised by staff that the proximity to release is not a strong correlate to lower risk and, indeed, some indication, which escapes me, to be more indicative of individuals near the end of sentence than those who are beginning sentences. So I think that just emphasizes, though, again that we have to rely on the best available measurements of risk and the best known management techniques for containing or managing the risk and that all decisions have to be dependent on those considerations. After that, we can move forward.

Mr. Faurchou: I appreciate what the Minister is saying, and, yes, there are variables and regardless of what length of stay that is lapsed or yet to be consumed.

I would like just to ask the Minister a quick question in regard to the fencing around the Agassiz Youth Centre. That was a considerable bone of contention by many residents on both sides of the fence within the community and within the Agassiz youth compound as well, wondering whether there is still consideration for replacement of the compound fencing. I do know that there was consideration of that and that further study was being undertaken, looking at other facilities with different type of mesh so that climbing of the fence was not as easily accomplished.

Mr. Mackintosh: As I think the Member appreciates, that fence was constructed at the cost of almost half a million dollars only a few years ago. Indeed, I remember the fence going up and no gate. I remember there was—not a joke, I do not think that would be fair to say—a running concern about that, but there are currently no plans to replace that fence which is a new instalment.

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the Minister for his response. Mr. Chairperson, I would just like to move onto one last area of concern in Portage la Prairie, the facility that the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba funded with support from various government agencies to establish in Portage la Prairie. That is the residency for adolescence with addictions. I would like to ask

the Minister, because that particular facility to my knowledge has had a difficult time securing enough persons with addictions to make gainful employment of all the staff that they have hired. There has been a start-up/shutdown/start-up type of mode, and I am wondering whether or not because it is a "voluntary incarceration," that it effectively is perhaps not being supported as well as it could be through the judicial arm of government. I am wondering whether the Minister has any thoughts in that regard.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, of course, is an independently administered government organization with financial support through the Department of Health expenditures. In terms of financial assistance to AFM, I would refer the Member to the Health Estimates process for the appropriate staff and the attention of the Minister on that, if that is his wish.

In terms of the referral of individuals under sentence to AFM by the courts, that is a matter largely governed by judicial determination by judges of the court. The position of Crown attorneys as to the appropriateness of AFM intervention really is determined on a case-by-case basis. If an individual has a particular case where there was some concern that an individual should have gone there and did not, or went there and should not have, I would refer that to the Department, to the Prosecutions branch which, of course, operates professionally according to its own assessment of individual cases. We could get an answer for the Member.

Mr. Faurchou: I believe the Minister in his comments is appreciative of the facility in Portage la Prairie because it is relatively new. I do believe that is a service that is very much needed within our society at present time. However, what I am concerned about is that it is not known to all parties that could potentially refer persons to that facility.

* (15:40)

I do not think that all Crown attorneys, I do not think all magistrates and the provincial court judges are aware of this facility. So I am concerned about the communication, because I cannot see in the entire province that we do not

have the numbers, if I can use that term, to make this facility a viable operation.

Mr. Mackintosh: I thank the Member for that positive suggestion of communication and will undertake as a result of that question to communicate the services offered, the range of supports available through AFM and Portage la Prairie to the Crown prosecutor's office at our regional office there.

Mr. Faursehou: I thank the Minister very much for his response. There has been a lot of good that has come out of these type of residencies and addictions services. The Minister may or may not be aware that Canada is taking a leadership role in this capacity, recognizing that young people do unfortunately have addictions to different drugs and alcohol. There are persons that are coming to this country from abroad.

There was a documentary done on the facility that was in Alberta that the Manitoba residency program was modelled upon. I think that there is a great opportunity to not only promote it in our province but in other jurisdictions as well, because it is most certainly a service that can be very, very worthwhile to a young person that has run astray with an addiction. Is there further comment on that from the Minister in this regard?

Mr. Mackintosh: I could just add that we will as well communicate as appropriate with the court administration at Portage la Prairie with regard to the Member's suggestions. Just in terms of the thrust of the question, I certainly agree that dealing with the group causes, whether their addictions, what is the cause even of the addiction I think is important when we are looking at acting out in criminal behaviour, whether youth or adult. I certainly am interested in pursuing how well we are using those kinds of services and whether it is with regard to impaired driving or the other offences in the criminal code.

Mr. Faursehou: I thank the Minister for his response, Mr. Chairperson. I would just like to leave the Minister with the thought that the Department of Justice is a significant employer within Portage la Prairie and does continue to play a large part in the economy of Portage la

Prairie. I would like to stress at this time to the Minister that this continued level of economic activity from his department would most certainly be welcome, if not enhanced, I might say, to offer even further employment opportunities, not only for what we term Corrections staff, but for those that are involved in apprenticeship and teaching capacities that hopefully will change the course of lifestyle that the inmates have previously chosen.

So, with that, I thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and would like to turn it over to my colleague from Charleswood for a few questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I guess the first question I have this afternoon and, if you do not mind, I am just going to jump around to a few different small questions before I get into the issue of child prostitution. In the area of maintenance enforcement, I guess my first question just might be a general one in terms of the functioning of that particular program and if there are any current issues of concern within the Maintenance Enforcement department

Mr. Mackintosh: We had dealt with this to some extent, questions from the critic. Over the last number of years I have become increasingly aware of concerns about the system in place for maintenance enforcement in Manitoba, recognizing that this is an area that is critical to the well-being of children and families in Manitoba.

My concern is at three levels. The first level of concern is the difficulty in collecting maintenance when one spouse, the paying spouse, leaves Manitoba and how we have to look for more effective ways to collect for extra-provincial debts.

The second area of concern is the administration of the Maintenance Enforcement office within Manitoba itself. At one time shortly after my election, as I recall, I had observed that they were shovelling water over there. The delay caused to a certain extent by the number of cases and the lack of resources to deal with all those cases was causing considerable stress on those who were waiting for the payment of maintenance to come to their family. I know over the course of some time there has

been some addition of staff reflecting in no small way the increase in the number of cases, which goes up every year.

This budget includes amounts to enhance the staffing levels at the Maintenance Enforcement office and I think represents a significant dedication of political will to try to deal with the challenges and the shortcomings of maintenance enforcement at the administrative level. As well, there has been considerable work done to increase the effectiveness and the organization and protocol of that office.

The third area is the area of the collection tools. The Department is analyzing how maintenance enforcement tools can be enhanced and strengthened. As the Member may be aware, I have had some long-standing interest in this area, and that will be pursued. I do not know if the Member had certain particular questions, but that was the general approach of the Government to look at maintenance enforcement from those three perspectives: the extra provincial collection of maintenance, how maintenance enforcement office is staffed and organized, and, third, the collection tools available by way of legislation.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if there is any consideration being given for those that fall behind on their maintenance payments, as to whether or not they will be obligated to pay interest on the portion that they have fallen behind on their payment. I was in the Aboriginal community several months ago, and that was an issue that came up there and one that they felt certainly left an unfair balance in the situation.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, anyway when I first heard that right now—where was the Member over the last number of years when we have been calling for that? I hope the Member now and hope her caucus will support us, because they did not support us when we asked for this in opposition, that interest be added to arrears. When someone is looking at the priority to be assigned to the payment of certain debts, one is going to look to see where the highest interest payments are and pay off those debts first. Of all the debts in the world, or in Manitoba, that do

not have interest, it is maintenance, which is the most important debt that is owing.

So our government is actively considering that. It involves some systems changes. It involves other changes of protocol. It is our expectation that we will be able to move on that one in the very near future. So I certainly support that concept, and I look forward to considering the options as to how that can be facilitated in this province.

Mrs. Driedger: On the issue of domestic violence and the recommendations from the Lavoie inquiry, I guess I would like to get a sense of where this government is going in addressing the issue of domestic violence.

Mr. Mackintosh: One of the earliest announcements made by the Government on assuming office was in the area of domestic violence, and we delivered on several election promises. First of all, it was important that following the shutting off of shelter funding to the Flin Flon-Creighton shelter a number of years ago when the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) was Minister of Family Services, as I recall—I could be wrong, but that was my recollection—we had a long-standing commitment to restore funding to the level that a shelter could be supported.

I understand the Flin Flon community has, over the last couple of years, rallied and put in place a resource centre, which, I understand, had funding from the Saskatchewan Government, ironically, for certain beds, but not from the Manitoba Government. But I understand that that support from the community has strengthened and that there was funding eventually secured to the extent of funding available for safe houses. But, on coming into office, the Government reinstated funding to a shelter level to enable them to make available to the community that kind of servicing.

As well, we had committed during the campaign to increasing the allowable stay in shelters from 10 days to 30 days. We thought that was a very important change. Sometimes women were being asked to leave a shelter on the basis of arbitrary calculation of days when there could be a significant risk, or there was no

second-stage housing available. That announcement was certainly heartily endorsed and received by many who have been urging change over the last number of years in that regard.

A third area was to enhance the funding for shelters from the Department of Family Services and Housing, and additional resources for staffing were made available to every shelter in Manitoba. We were very proud of that announcement as well. In addition, we have been looking at the domestic violence and stalking legislation that is currently in place, with a view to determining how well that is working and what improvements can be offered. That process is ongoing, and if the Member is aware of any experiences with that legislation from constituents or others who might bring matters to her attention to relay that to us, that would be helpful.

We are also looking at, of course, the Lavoie recommendations to see how we can deal with some of the recommendations that remain outstanding and, in that regard, too, have been identified for prioritization. We are looking at how we can improve the hearing of bail cases and domestic violence cases; as well, we have been looking at how risk of an accused can be assessed at the juncture of bail.

I just want to add that there is ongoing a committee that was established after the release of the Lavoie report, which is continuing to look at the operation of government programming in this regard as well as keep abreast of developments elsewhere and how they may be applicable in Manitoba.

In a similar vein, staff was just discussing, and I think it is important to put on the record, that the Child Victim Support Initiative also has ramifications for how well we deal with family violence in Manitoba through the creation of the child court room and the child waiting room, for example, in the Winnipeg Law Courts building, and, as well, the developing expertise and specialization in prosecutions and courts when it comes to child victims.

Mrs. Driedger: The Minister had mentioned that there were some outstanding recommendations that were being looked at from the

Lavoie inquiry. I wonder if those were all of the ones that he has mentioned that this government is addressing or if there are others.

* (16:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: I had noted that the two recommendations that were outstanding that we had prioritized were the bail-risk assessment of accused and options are being developed now. It was an interest of the new government in coming into office to focus on that. I know the committee I had referred to is preparing options as to how to best proceed and enhance the assessment of offenders at bail. The other one that I had noted for the Member was the prioritizing of the recommendation with regard to the establishment of moving bail applications onto a docket that would be devoted to domestic violence.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me if he has been involved in any discussions with men's groups who think they are being unfairly treated in this particular area? I know I have certainly had occasion to have some discussions with men in my area who feel that the system is very unbalanced and unfair towards men.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know we have had communications from an organization that was looking for assistance and I understand had been getting assistance from a number of sources to do a study to determine the needs of men who were sexually abused as children.

Mrs. Driedger: My question to the Minister was more related to men who felt that within the system of domestic violence and in family law and in situations where there are custody issues, these particular men are certainly feeling that it is an unfair and unbalanced system, that there is more favouritism towards the woman in the case. I am wondering if there is any comment the Minister might like to make on this.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know we have heard from time to time over the years concern expressed by an organization, I think it was called Men's Equalization, as I recall. I do not know if that is still in existence. I have not heard from those people for a long time. I know they were

concerned and quite focussed on perceptions of the former government's policies. I do not know if that organization is still active in Manitoba.

But, of course, there are checks and balances within the court system, whether they are in the civil courts or the criminal courts in terms of the rights of an accused or rights of applicants and respondents in family matters. If there are particular issues, the Department and I are certainly willing to look at them. I know I have met with individuals from Men's Equalization. I cannot recall when the last meeting may have been, but it was certainly before the election; many months before the last election that I last had a meeting with any of those individuals. I had reviewed a lot of documentation that was provided. As I recall, I think they were going to transform more into a political movement. I think that was the foundation of the Manitoba Party, as I recall. In fact, an individual that I met with, I think, had an active role in the development of that other political party. I think they wanted to pursue their issues at the political level as well. I do not recall those issues being announced during the campaign, either. That is the extent of my recollection of that area of concern, aside from what the Member for Lac du Bonnet talked about, the campaign of Senator Anne Cools.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister—I am assuming and I am hoping—if there is probably going to be continuing awareness campaigns in order to address this issue of domestic violence, as there have been in the past with television commercials and the brochures that have been out. I wonder if there are any plans by this government to look at an awareness program on an ongoing basis, how often that would be, and what the funding for that might be.

Mr. Mackintosh: On coming into office, we committed to continuing the public service programming that had been developed following the Lavoie implementation committee's report to the public. As well, we are now looking at the information that is available to the public with regard to the domestic violence and stalking legislation to see if there can be a different approach in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister for clarification of his answer. I guess I am wondering, is there going to be an annual commitment so that this issue is kept before the public at least on an annual basis, so that women are reminded that they do have an out. Sometimes it takes certainly awareness campaigns to give women the courage to move out of those situations. I am wondering if this government is going to commit to an annual program or an annual campaign to make sure the public is aware.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Government, and through the lead Minister of Family Services and Housing, is committed, I understand, to domestic violence month, as I recall, and having a series of initiatives on an annual basis around that issue.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister if there are any programs being initiated to address the issue of dating violence, because I certainly understand from meeting some young people over this past year this is a really serious issue. I had a beautiful young woman come into my office who told me a horrific story of dating abuse—and she is sixteen years old—where her face was smashed up; she had a broken nose; she had broken ribs; and all of this occurring by, supposedly, nice kids that are out there.

The language that is occurring in teen relationships, the expectations and the pressures on the young people, sounds like it is something that we really must be aware of. I am wondering if there are any efforts being put forward to address the issue of dating violence.

Mr. Mackintosh: We certainly recognize that violence against women is not something that occurs only after wedding vows are made or there is an adult relationship. This challenge has to be incorporated in our thinking in terms of prevention and prosecution. Certainly, when it comes to the Department of Justice, we will vigorously and in a specialized way pursue charges that are brought to us by law enforcement agencies. In terms of preventative programming, the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale), through the Family Violence branch, may have more to add on that one. I know the Member is the critic for that area

and may want to pursue that with that minister as well.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me his understanding of child abuse rates in Manitoba and whether they are going up or down in recent times.

Mr. Mackintosh: I might just add, just to clarify my earlier remarks, the Family Violence Court would be the forum and the Family Violence prosecutors would be the prosecutors where dating violence was in a situation where there was a long-term relationship.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Just to repeat my question for the Minister: I am wondering what his understanding is of child abuse rates in Manitoba and whether they have been going up or down in recent times.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can undertake to provide the Member with the best analysis that is available about those rates recognizing that crimes against children may not be as accurately as we would like reflected in rates, because the rates would be based, by and large, on complaints made to the police. Often child abuse is not reported, unfortunately, and systems are not then given the opportunity to intervene and help deal with the situation.

In terms of the number and the nature of crimes committed against children, we can go back to our files and look for that. I wonder if the Member is interested in child abuse in the sense of Child and Family Services intervention?

Mrs. Driedger: I am certainly interested in finding out what the rates are in Manitoba in particular. I certainly realize that children are in a very unique situation, and it is a very difficult one for courts and adults and police to address in trying to find out whether the allegations are true or false, or what is happening because it is so difficult for kids.

Around the whole issue of child abuse, I guess, I find this such an incredible topic and such an incredible subject matter to find out that children would be physically or sexually abused.

In looking at a lot of the studies that have been done on the issue of sexual abuse of children, it probably is one of the most disgusting things that one could ever want to read about or address. It is appalling to know that these things are happening, and I know they are happening. My interest, I guess, partly is to find out what is happening in terms of are they going up or are they going down?

I can recall when I was in Child Find, we had a phone call from, I will say, a small town in Manitoba. It was from a coffee shop owner. This particular coffee shop owner knew that four little girls were being sexually abused by the grandpa, but this coffee shop owner did not want to give us any more information than that because she was afraid her business was going to be affected by reporting such a situation. So, we never could find out the names, and these four little girls went on to be continually sexually abused by the grandpa.

I am sure there are other situations like that in the province as well. I have had numerous discussions with numerous people about the issue of child abuse, and it is certainly something I would hope could be eradicated at some point.

The Child Abuse Registry, I guess, is my next question in terms of wondering whether or not the Minister has information on whether the numbers that are being registered in that registry are going up or down?

Mr. Mackintosh: I will refer that question to the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) who has responsibility for the Child Abuse Registry. I am sure that the staff would have that available.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister what his thoughts are on zero tolerance toward child abuse?

Mr. Mackintosh: I guess the initial question is: How does the Member define zero tolerance, and how does she define child abuse in the context of the question? Then perhaps I can answer that question. As she knows, the Criminal Code is there and in place. What we have right now, I think, is a system whereby children and sometimes the parents of the children who would

otherwise come forward are concerned and often afraid of disclosing, are concerned about how the criminal process would work, are concerned about how the case would eventually turn out and whether there would be any satisfaction and even more particularly whether there would be a conviction which would be effective in making sure that other children are safe from offending behaviour.

That is why this government moved, as my first comprehensive announcement, for child victim support initiative which I outlined in detail in my opening remarks. We have got to make sure that child victims and their families are much more comfortable in the criminal justice system when they come forward.

Part and parcel of that and the second objective is to ensure that we have the strongest evidence available, so that when there is a finding of guilt the sentence will be very serious and will deal as effectively as possible within our justice system and within the confines of the Code to make sure that the offending behaviour is dealt with. In that regard, we will be looking at the sentencing stage to see whether there is a pattern of sentences against the particular offender and whether a dangerous offender status can be pursued.

As well, we will be looking at more focussed conditions if the individual is sentenced to serve time in the community, but, with that in mind, I think we can make some significant improvements both with regard to the matters that come forward to the criminal justice system and perhaps if Manitobans feel more comfortable and assured that child victim cases will be dealt with in a more appropriate way in the future of Manitoba, more people will come forward.

Now that could mean that the rates will increase, but that may not be the rates of actual abuse, but rather the rates of confidence in the justice system as one way of dealing with this challenge for society.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister can tell me whether he is finding through his following of the decisions by the courts in terms of punishment, whether or not punishment for

crimes against children are softer than punishment for crimes against adults.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I think the Member would have to clarify the information she is looking for. Does she have some evidence or is she suggesting that convictions under one section of the Criminal Code end up in more lenient sentences when the victim is a child as compared to an adult and so on?

I do know that there has been some research, I believe, out of the University of Ottawa that suggests that crimes against children in the sense of assaults against children may be more lenient in certain circumstances, but I do not believe the literature is definitive on that one. All I know for sure is that I think we can do a much better job in terms of the sentencing we can urge from the courts, as well as how well we deal with child victims and their families. That is why our Child Victim Support Initiative was important to us.

Of course, we remind the Member that it is a work in progress, and, as we speak, the child victim waiting room is being prepared, and the child friendly courtroom in Winnipeg. Those are early signs of how this initiative is developing. As well, our prosecutors have now undergone a two-day workshop with one of Canada's foremost experts on child witnesses, so they can be more attuned to the particular needs of those kinds of cases and to the particular challenges and dynamics of how child victim cases can be prosecuted in Manitoba.

So I think there is developing a very significant shift and a prioritization of these kinds of cases. My hope is that the end result will be more effective sentencing for children. I think that this kind of specialization is overdue, and I think it can make a difference.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me if any conditional sentences are handed out when it comes to charging somebody who has committed an assault against a child.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, we certainly know that those kinds of sentences are being handed out across Canada, and that was a concern of ours and why we have suggested or urged the federal minister to amend the Criminal Code, to create

what we call a presumptive list of those kinds of offences for which conditional sentences should not be made available.

* (16:20)

When we are talking about crimes against children, we think the deterrent message and the denunciation that is important should not be detracted from, but, again, we know too that conditional sentences are handed out by the courts dependent on the particular law and the facts available for each matter. Breach of trust cases obviously are another area of concern.

I was just recalling that our request to the federal minister, as I recall, was saying that crimes involving violence against children were so serious that a message of denunciation was very important.

Mrs. Driedger: I recall reading, and I do not know that I am going to have my statistic correct, but the National Crime Prevention Council in the last number of years has certainly been putting out some good information.

One of the numbers that sort of sticks in my mind, and again I am not sure I am accurate, but it had indicated that in federal prisons 75 percent of the prisoners had been sexually abused as children. I am wondering if the Minister is aware of any such information.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think there is accepted by those who study correlations between offending behaviour and background that there is, indeed, a high incidence of history of sexual abuse involving certain kinds of offenders and persons who engage in certain other behaviour as adults. For example, I understand that studies of adult prostitution have indicated a high correlation between prostitution and a history of sexual abuse as a female child. I have heard those kinds of statistics with regard to other sexual offenders and others.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So I think it is doubly important that we do the best job that we can given the laws of the country and the resource limitations. We are not

only talking about ensuring the appropriate sanctions for their own sake, not at all, but rather to try and save other children from being victimized by this kind of offence. It is a horribly victimizing crime, and there are cycles that follow if we do not deal effectively with it. So we have to be inventive, and I think here in Manitoba now we are poised, indeed, if we are not already, providing some national leadership and perhaps international leadership on how child victim cases are dealt with.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister is aware of any correlation between arson and boys who have been sexually abused.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know that there are correlations that have indicated that not only sexual abuse but physical abuse of children can result in offending behaviour. Indeed, I have heard the figure that a boy who has witnessed his mother beaten by his father is a thousand times more likely to commit an offence as a young offender than a boy who has not seen such activity in the home. I heard anecdotes to the effect that a study in Saskatchewan indicated that 80 percent of the inmate population comprise victims of sexual or physical abuse in their early lives, and that would include both sexual and physical abuse. So we know that there are correlations and there are explanations that may be emerging that can be acted on and make Manitobans more safer in the future.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if we have in existence, and I am not sure I have the abbreviations right, but PACCA, or some child abuse prevention committee that the police are quite involved in. There are government representatives on this, and it is some kind of a child abuse co-ordinating committee. I am wondering if the Minister is aware of such a committee that still exists or what its proper name might be.

Mr. Mackintosh: PACCA has had membership, in part, representatives from the Department of Justice, I believe the Department of Family Services, historically. I am advised that a representative from the Prosecutions branch in the past has actually chaired that association, but it does comprise an organization that bridges a

number of different organizations dealing with the issues of child protection and child abuse.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if it would be possible for the Minister to table the terms of reference of that committee and if they put out any reports on an annual basis or a quarterly basis that it would be possible to also get those reports?

Mr. Mackintosh: To the extent that that information is available to our department, we will make that available.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister is aware of the effectiveness of the committee, if in fact its intent is to address the issue of prevention of child abuse, whether that committee is the most effective mechanism that we have in addressing this, or if there is an opportunity to revisit the whole issue of prevention of child abuse in some way?

Mr. Mackintosh: When we provide the terms of reference and any reports that could give an indication to the Member—of course, success is always subjective in terms of perceptions of an individual, but it is one committee or one tool that is available. Of course, the Child Advocate is another. I understand that there is a liaison there. I think initiatives like our Child Victim Support Initiative and the growing teamwork that I have seen around the development of that proposal are other tools.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, my next question is on a different topic. Having come from an organization where we dealt with parental abduction a number of times, one of the big problems we ran into was interprovincial jurisdictions. If a child was given over to a parent here, custody was given to a parent here, and the other parent chose to abduct that child and took that child to British Columbia, that parent could then register and get custody in British Columbia, which would then leave the parent left behind here to have to fight the case in British Columbia, because the custody order for Manitoba was not recognized in B.C. That created huge problems in terms of many, many cases in the whole area of parental abduction.

I guess I am wondering if there have been any improvements in that over the last few years.

* (16:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: This is an area that is a highly specialized area of law in the Family Law branch of the department. If the Member has any particular questions, we could refer that and they could get back directly to the Member or otherwise if the Member wants some answers on that one today. But in terms of the particular questions as to how extrajurisdictional orders can be litigated by someone in Manitoba is an area that we can refer to the department and determine whether there have been any changes over the last number of years and let the Member know.

Mrs. Driedger: It certainly is a topic that created a lot of concern for us because it certainly in turn creates a lot of cost and worry for the parent here that had custody who ends up becoming a victim themselves. When they have custody, their child is abducted, the abducting parent goes to another province and ends up being given custody, it creates a lot of expense within the justice system across the country and victimizes certainly one of the parents.

I guess I would just like to bring this issue forward so that the Minister is aware that this has happened. It has happened a number of times across the country. At one point I understood that ministers across the country, or deputy ministers, I think, maybe, or somebody was going to be looking at this to try to address this issue, which is really a bit of a problem. So I would be interested if there was any information.

Certainly I have talked to the department numerous times on this subject over many years and would be interested to find out if there is a committee of deputies or if there is a conference that has happened in the area. To have any of that information would be useful.

Mr. Mackintosh: That is an issue that I understand has been discussed at a senior level. What we can do is obtain the information from the department and let the Member know the answer to the last question as well as what the

current status of the consideration of options is at the senior official level.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the Minister for that. I do appreciate knowing that. It certainly created an awful lot of work and anxiety for us at Child Find, not to mention what the parent went through or the child particularly.

I would like to switch topics now and get on to the issue of children involved in prostitution, sexually exploited children. I guess I will start by just saying that a number of years ago, maybe in about '96, two young women from British Columbia who were former child prostitutes came to Winnipeg. I had the privilege of spending a couple of days with them and I learned an awful lot about the issue of sexually exploited children.

At the same time we were looking at issues related to runaways and sexually exploited children because a number of runaways had certainly been involved in prostitution. So Child Find found itself getting drawn into the subject of child prostitution. It became something that the more I learned about, the more I realized that we really needed to look at a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy in the province to address the issue, because it really is a situation where I believe children involved in prostitution are victims of child abuse.

I guess I would like to just find out if this is a view that the Minister has himself, because it certainly drives an approach to how one deals with the situation from many angles if one does believe that children involved in prostitution are indeed victims of child abuse.

Mr. Mackintosh: The approach by the Government is to view children involved in this kind of activity as sexually exploited, as exploited individuals, and indeed the terminology that we adopt is not to use the words "child prostitution" so much as it is sexual exploitation of children, to reflect accurately our analysis of the problem and to focus then on those who do exploit and to ensure that they are dealt with appropriately.

Mrs. Driedger: On that issue, then, I guess I am wondering how the Government is doing in terms of the John school and seizure of vehicles.

Mr. Mackintosh: Manitoba is taking part in an initiative that for the first time in Canada recognizes the bridge between Justice and Family Services approaches and recognizes that this challenge is one of sexual exploitation of children, by way of a deputies' meeting of deputies of both Justice and Family Services. I think this is a very positive development and recognizes that the solutions are not simply the criminal justice system but as well are preventative in nature and require interventions and strategies by Child and Family Services agencies or Family Services ministers. And so we look forward to hearing at the political level of the deliberations of the deputies. I understand that meeting is to be held within the next week or two.

Mrs. Driedger: The Children and Youth Secretariat had spent probably three years dealing with this issue of how to address the situation of child victimization through prostitution, and it was largely driven by the community. I was involved on that committee as well as a legislative assistant to the Minister of Family Services. It is a particular interest of mine because I was one of the ones that felt that the community had to be hugely involved in this. They are certainly the ones dealing with the issues and certainly the ones that have, I think, a lot of good answers to the problem, and the Children and Youth Secretariat worked on this quite intensively. I must add. The committee was made up of many, many community agencies as well as many government departments, and I guess I would like to know then what has happened. We did have—I believe there was a Crown attorney on there as well; there was a police officer on there.

I guess I am wondering if the Minister could tell me his understanding of that whole process. Where did it end up? It had put together a report that was submitted to Cabinet, and at that point we were in an election time. It was left over to the new government, and I guess I would like to find out from the Minister an update on where that might be.

* (16:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: I know that one of the frustrations expressed about the work of the

Child and Youth Secretariat was the time that it took to put together initiatives, or not initiatives even, but put together reports and then there were reports on reports. I recall work on gangs done a long time ago, and the final report was never acted on. I think there were some 20 recommendations in there. I do not know if a single recommendation was ever acted on by the government.

In terms of the other areas, and I know that this was one of them, I know that there had been considerable delay and inaction and where the Department of Justice sees us going is reflected in part by the Child Victim Support Initiative, which includes these kinds of crimes for prosecution by specialized prosecutors within the protocol of the Child Victim Support Initiative. I have certainly shared insights with people for example, some of the wonderful people at New Directions who are working on this one and have a very good sense of how we can improve services and interventions to reduce this kind of exploitation. It is my best advice for the Member that, in terms of the prevention programming as distinguished from the prosecutions policy, the Estimates for the Department of Family Services and Housing would be a good place for her to pursue this line of questioning.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, I guess I am going to just disagree a little bit, because the program, when we were looking at the whole issue of sexually exploited children and it was being dealt with through the Children and Youth Secretariat, the way the Secretariat had been set up was certainly to look at co-operation between all departments, Justice, Family Services, Housing. It was a partnership approach knowing that the whole issue around children involved in prostitution has certainly impacted in all of those areas. So, there was a lot of work to do in this particular area, because when you bring community partners to a table, you are going to find a very varied response.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I am certainly aware that New Directions, in fact, Jane Runner who deals with a certain program at New Directions related to working with prostitutes—I was involved in this com-

mittee through the Children and Youth Secretariat, and when we were addressing it we looked at many components: public awareness, intervention with customers of the sex trade, intervention with pimps, intervention with adult prostitutes, intervention with children involved in prostitution, as well as an evaluation component. We looked at it very intensively from many, many angles, and we felt strongly that we had to move in an area where we could best deal with the issue of children involved in prostitution. We ended up because we were trying to involve many partners in coming to the table to try to make sure we did not miss anything. It perhaps did take a little bit longer, but that does not mean that it was not effective.

The report that came forward to Treasury Board put forth some interesting ideas, and when we are looking at anywhere between 600 to 2000 young people involved in prostitution in Winnipeg, it is certainly an area that demands a certain amount of attention that I do not think can be passed over to Family Services but has to be part of an effort by all of the five ministers that are now involved in this new Healthy Child Initiative. I am assuming as one of the ministers involved in the Healthy Child Initiative that the Minister of Justice will have some stake in this and not pass me off to the Minister of Family Services.

This particular group, I have to also say, had some concern that all five ministers were men and there were no women ministers on that Cabinet committee addressing issues of the Health Child Initiative, and that was certainly an interesting bit of information that came out of this particular committee. It was their information and concern that it was an all-male Cabinet committee dealing with the issue of child prostitution. So I think because this Minister of Justice is part of that five-man committee that is dealing with issues around Healthy Child, I think this topic is very appropriate to be discussed at this level, and while there are prevention aspects there are intervention aspects, too.

I guess I am going to have a number of questions around this, but going back to an initial question: Could the Minister clarify for me then what the new Treasury Board, I guess,

decided to do with this particular concept paper that was presented?

Mr. Mackintosh: If there was a paper prepared for the previous government for the Cabinet or the Treasury Board, then this government is not privy to that. The question would have to go to the members of the former Cabinet as to what happened to that document and the plans to deal with the sexual exploitation of children.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, my understanding that that request for funding came probably, I am going to assume through Family Services, and at Treasury Board it was addressed jointly with a Department of Justice component as well that was looking at adult prostitution, so that Treasury Board was actually trying to encourage a view to looking at both the adult prostitution and the child prostitution in a comprehensive way. I guess, I would just like to ask the Minister if that was the case, and he may not be aware of this part of the children involved in prostitution, whether or not any of this discussion has come up within Cabinet in terms of addressing this issue.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am more than open to hear from the Member any insights into what the former Cabinet was doing behind its closed doors or Treasury Board. I always look forward to that kind of information, and if she could provide me with some documentation as to what they had before them. I do not know if she has to check with her colleagues or not. It would be highly unusual, I think, to disclose that kind of political advice or options, but that is a matter that was for the former government. I, for one, am not privy to that Cabinet consultation paper. I am assuming that there was one from what the Member is saying. I have no personal information about that.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I find it a little bit disturbing that the Minister might become cheeky on such a subject as this, because it is certainly one where we are looking at between 600 to 2000 young people involved in prostitution in Winnipeg alone. I would then like to ask the Minister whether or not we are going to see from this government a comprehensive approach to the issue involving children and

prostitution, because that is certainly going to have a Justice component to it.

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: The Member asked me questions about the former government's initiatives, assuming there was one, because I never saw one. I heard talk, and I know there were a number of campaign promises in '95 about prostitution generally. So for questions to be posed to the current government about what the former government was in the process of doing is highly unusual. I do not find it cheeky; it is just not a matter within my purview.

In terms of the current government, the Healthy Child's Committee of Cabinet has begun its deliberations and is pursuing looking at different options, and announcements will be made in due course in terms of the priorities and the endeavours of that initiative.

Mrs. Driedger: I am certainly aware that a report has come forward to this government from the community group that is still addressing this issue. Once the Children and Youth Secretariat was dismantled, the community group still continued, made up of police officers, Dr. Jane Ursel, and a number of others. That particular group put forth, I am assuming, as I have not seen the particular document, a very similar document to the one that had initially been presented to the former government at the end of their term. So that particular document would have come forward, and I know it has. I am wondering if this minister has seen it or it has been discussed amongst his colleagues.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Member may be referring to New Directions, I am not sure. If she could tell us the name of the organization that she has in mind?

Mrs. Driedger: The organization does not really have a name, although Jane Runner from New Directions was the chair of this committee. This committee was the one that had been set up through the Children and Youth Secretariat. It was part and parcel of their work that was going on at that level. When this government dismantled the Children and Youth Secretariat, that was still a program of the Children and

Youth Secretariat that would have come here. I would have expected that, as this Cabinet minister was part of the five-man committee of cabinet ministers that is now overseeing and providing policy to the new Healthy Child Initiative—why this Minister would not be aware of this.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can look and get back to the Member as to identify the proposal she might be talking about or the initiative. I am aware of initiatives by New Directions. For example, the TERF program, and Jane Runner has been instrumental in the development of and the administration of that program. If she wants information on that, I can respond.

Mrs. Driedger: I am very well aware of the Turf program and the efforts that Jane Runner is having over at New Directions. The proposal that came in from the committee that had been struck through the Children and Youth Secretariat that was chaired by Jane Runner was specifically dealing with sexually exploited children. It was a comprehensive approach. The one piece of it that is very critical, and the one I am particularly concerned about, is a safe house for child prostitutes. I wonder if the Minister is maybe aware of that particular piece and whether that might have been discussed by the five-man Cabinet committee that is overseeing the Healthy Child Initiative.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am aware of the proposal going back a few years, actually. It was called the Da'awin proposal. If that is what the Member is referring to, I remember its tortuous history and the former government's lack of response to that initiative for many years.

Mrs. Driedger: This was not the Da'awin report. The Da'awin report, I am very familiar with as well. This particular report is addressing the issue of a safe house for child prostitutes. It is specifically in that area around child prostitution. It was looking at experience in other jurisdictions, such as Alberta or Las Vegas, Nevada, where they have safe houses set up to address the issue of child prostitution

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, if there is a Cabinet minute or a Treasury Board minute, we do not have access to that one; and, if it was a submission made to the former government, those reports are sealed as well. Now, if there has been a resubmission of a proposal that fits the description put forward by the Member, we will undertake to do that, to discover if the submission has been received, and what department it was directed to, and if there is any further status that we can advise the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: I would be very interested in finding out where that might be. I do know it was submitted to this new government, probably in about March of this year. I might assume that it had maybe been sent because it had originated out of the Child and Youth Secretariat, that it might have gone up through that channel, through and into perhaps the Healthy Child Initiative. But, as this minister sits on the five-man Cabinet committee that oversees the Healthy Child Initiative, I guess I am wondering how often this committee of five Cabinet ministers meets to look at and set the direction for the Healthy Child Initiative.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can make whatever inquiries it takes to determine the status of any submission if it was made, if the Member has personal knowledge of its having been resubmitted, presumably to the Family Services Department, from the description provided by the Member, in which case we can make inquiries or the Member can deal with the Minister directly. But we can undertake to make inquiries to determine if it has gone there for analysis on the pros and cons of the submission.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for his willingness to look into that. I certainly will be asking the Minister of Family Services that as well, but it has led me into, because this is such a huge involvement in the area of justice: How often does this five-man committee of Cabinet ministers that oversees the Healthy Child Initiative meet?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, that committee I am a part of, and the reason that Justice is a part of is manifold, so that Justice plays a more balanced

approach in helping to stop people from getting involved in criminal activity, and becoming victimized by criminal activity. It is an important role for us. That committee meets to discuss matters from time to time; as well, it is assisted by individuals who are employees of government to assist in its deliberation. As well, the Committee will report to Cabinet, which meets from time to time, as need be.

* (17:00)

Mrs. Driedger: Back to this "meets from time to time," I wonder if the Minister could be a little bit more clear in terms of how often this five-man committee of Cabinet ministers meets to set the direction and the policy, which is what I was told in the House during one Question Period, that they are the ones set up to set the policy and direction for programming around children's issues. As a person who has special interest in children's issues, I would really hope that this five-man committee of Cabinet ministers is meeting on a regular basis to address this. I guess I am wondering if the Minister has any more information in that area in terms of what exactly, if they are not meeting—how are programs involving children's issues being co-ordinated through this new Healthy Child Initiative?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, you know, the meeting schedule of this committee is one thing. I think we met in the last week or two. At the last meeting, it was clear that this is an organization that will provide general policy direction for how we promote the advancement of children, and healthy living for our children in Manitoba. I would urge the Member that the success and the change agent that this initiative will become will be determined not by the sex of the individuals on the policy committee, the Cabinet representatives, nor the number of meetings, but rather by outcomes.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister of Justice could tell me what outcomes then have been set by the five Cabinet ministers responsible for the Healthy Child Initiative.

Mr. Mackintosh: That area is under active consideration. Indeed it is developing now. I understand that the Member should know, or we can provide to the Member the broad areas of focus for the Healthy Child Initiative. The

particular programs now to be grouped under that initiative are being discussed and further announcements will be made.

Mrs. Driedger: I am starting to get really concerned with what I am hearing, actually with what I am not hearing. I am beginning to have some concern here that children's programming is falling through the cracks here. I am getting a sense that the Minister has just said that he thinks they have met once within the last couple of weeks. I wonder if the Minister could be a little bit clearer. How many times has this group met? When was the last time? What was the date?

Mr. Mackintosh: The effect of government programming is measured by its effect. In this case it would be its effect on the well-being of children. The meetings, the committee meetings and the subcommittee meetings and so on, are just a vehicle for getting to where the Government is intending to go in the development of the Healthy Child Initiative. I do not know where the Member is going on this. This is an initiative that is engaging five members of Cabinet. We are in a stage now of policy development and determining the programming that comes under the ambit of the Healthy Child Initiative. This is the developmental phase now.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, certainly I understand that when a new government comes in, it is going to take some time to pull things together, but we have had eight months. I guess I would wonder why a new government then would dismantle the Children and Youth Secretariat, which was effectively addressing many issues around children, which was effectively bringing community partners to the table.

I can recall prior to the establishment of the Children and Youth Secretariat when I was one of those community agencies where it was very, very difficult to try to get a co-ordinated, comprehensive, integrated approach, because we saw each government department that sort of was wanting to do its own thing. The co-ordinated effort just was not happening. So when the Children and Youth Secretariat came into existence, it really did make a huge difference to those of us that were in the community.

Now I am seeing we have a new government that comes in, dismantles the Children and Youth Secretariat, sets up the Healthy Child Initiative, which now appears that for months and months and months it has only been something on paper. Sounds like the paper name was given, but there is no meat behind any of it, that what we have is maybe a floundering Healthy Child Initiative that is getting no direction.

We have got five ministers; it does not appear that they have met. They do not have a vision articulated for what they want this Healthy Child Initiative to be. I would have expected that Justice would have been playing a big role in this particular area, because there are so many justice issues that do impact on children. I am wondering if we have a big gap here in getting rid of one group, the Children and Youth Secretariat, and now we have got a Healthy Child Initiative that does not even seem to be operating.

We do not seem to have any direction that is coming from the ministers that I was told in the House would be providing policy for this.

So I guess I would like to ask the Minister: Where are the children's programs that the Children and Youth Secretariat were managing? Now we have the Healthy Child Initiative. Nobody seems to know what is happening in the area of child prostitution.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to make it clear, these are the Estimates of the Department of Justice, and the lead minister for the Healthy Child Initiative is the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale). The budget item is in that department. That is theirs. If the Member wants the answers to those questions, they are best put to the Minister responsible, as we in opposition did with the Children and Youth Secretariat issue.

Mrs. Driedger: I certainly will be putting the questions to the Minister of Family Services. I just thought that when you assign five people to provide policy and direction that there would have been a little bit more than just one line on a paper that says we are now going to have a Healthy Child Initiative. That does not seem to be going anywhere. I guess I have some concern

that it has probably fallen through the cracks in the last few months. When a program falls through the cracks it means kids are falling through the cracks.

But I will certainly be asking these questions along the way because I now have a huge concern, in fact more than I did before, because I knew that the Children and Youth Secretariat was finally starting to see some positive things that were happening. I know it took some time in coming together to get all of the departments willing to work together as a team in addressing the issue around children. Now I am sort of wondering if we are back to the same old way of getting rid of the Children and Youth Secretariat, not having a deputy minister at that level, bringing in a director who reports to an assistant deputy minister.

All of a sudden the whole emphasis around children's programming seems to really be watered down. It almost sounds like we are back to, well, Justice is going to do its thing, Health is going to do its thing, Education is going to do its thing, Family Services is going to do its thing because obviously the ministers are not coming together to look at this on a broad basis to come up with the policy and the direction and the vision for where children's programming in Manitoba should be going.

* (17:10)

So back to then maybe some of the things the Justice Minister can answer for me around the issue of prostitution—I guess I am wondering where we are at in terms of the john school and the jane school, or better known as the Prostitution Diversion Program—what are the evaluations of those two particular programs showing in terms of their effectiveness?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Government is continuing support of both of the programs referred to. Anecdotally, we have heard that according to all early indications these programs are generally meeting their objectives and certainly deserve to continue.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me how often there has been a john school since the new government took over.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can advise the Member of the frequency of those meetings.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it the police, then, that would determine how often a john school is held?

Mr. Mackintosh: It would depend on the number of referrals and that would be within the knowledge of the police department.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could table for me then the number of times that john school has been held since the new government has been in power, how many johns have attended that school, and if there is any report on the recidivism rate of the johns. Also, I would be interested, and maybe the Minister does have information, in the Prostitution Diversion Program, how often that has been held and how many prostitutes have gone through that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we can provide that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering too about the seizure of vehicles and where that particular program is at.

Mr. Mackintosh: I take it the Member is talking about the impoundment of vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act in respect of the prostitution related offences. She is nodding. That program is continuing.

Mrs. Driedger: Did the Minister say it is continuing?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I would just like to find out from the Minister then if he would also be able to provide me with the information of the number of vehicle seizures since October.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we can provide that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the Minister for that. What the people involved in child prostitution have been telling us for many years is that many of the young people are forced to become involved in prostitution

because of street gang pressure; and, with that being said, I guess I am wondering what the Minister's knowledge of that particular statement is, if indeed most of the child prostitutes here are running under the wing of a street gang.

Mr. Mackintosh: That information is anecdotal and that is why over the last number of years I have said that for an effective attack on this challenge there should also be an effective comprehensive attack on the activities of street gangs.

Mrs. Driedger: Does this comprehensive attack include keeping on the gang prevention co-ordinator working with the city providing the leadership and the direction and encouragement for the city to maintain that particular position? Because this particular person who is in that role has certainly had extensive involvement with the gangs and with the whole issue of prostitution that the gangs are involved in.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, does the Member have an evaluation of that program with her? She is saying that he has been effective in some area or been active. Does she have access to an evaluation?

Mrs. Driedger: I have been in discussion with Glen Cochrane of that particular program. Certainly he has written reports of what he views to be the effectiveness of the program. In speaking with the Social Planning Council or other inner-city groups, Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, other groups within the Aboriginal Centre on Higgins, you will find that same comment being made. So that is where I am getting my information from, particularly the Aboriginal community feeling that his role is a valid and effective one.

I am not sure if the Minister would like to comment further. Perhaps he has heard of an evaluation component that I have not.

Mr. Mackintosh: We are putting in place a 21-person criminal organizations unit in the Department of Justice at the provincial level. In terms of this position, it is a City position. It reports, I believe, to the Chief of Police, I said this in Question Period, the City of Winnipeg. It is wholly funded by the City of Winnipeg. It is a

city staff position. So that is their position. It is their job. If they do not want to continue funding it, then the City presumably has made a decision that they want to fund something else. So that is all I have to say on that.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, if the Minister wants to be tough on gangs, why would he not then take over the funding of that position?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, here on the one hand the Opposition says we have to be financially fiscally responsible, and on the other hand she is saying let us just fund a position that there has had no evaluation about, that is a city position. I mean, what other city positions should the Province fund? That is the City Government. I do not know. Does Brandon city have a position she wants us to fund? We are putting in place a 21-person, essentially a gang unit, in the province of Manitoba. We are funding a three-person gang awareness for the RCMP. But, if the position that she is talking about that reports to the Chief of Police is not wanted by the Chief of Police, why is she suggesting that provincial tax dollars go to that position? That is a question I have.

Mrs. Driedger: Has the Minister explored with the Chief why he would be getting rid of this position when in fact the Government is trying to take a lead here in terms of gang activity? Certainly, the Minister has made all kinds of comments in the last few years about gang activity, is trying to show a leadership role in this. I am wondering then if the Minister has been in discussion with the Chief as to why that position might be dropped. I mean, that is a prevention position. A lot of other positions are not prevention. This particular one is highly spoken of by the Aboriginal community, and I am wondering why the Minister would not take it upon himself to play a lead and co-ordinating role in this in terms of speaking with the Chief to find out a little bit more about that position.

* (17:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: I am not saying we would or we would not fund it. It is a City of Winnipeg municipal position that may or may not be effective according to the Chief. I look forward to hearing from the Chief of Police his views on

that position, indeed that incumbent for that matter, as to how effective that position has been. But I do know the City of Winnipeg Police Service has recently reorganized how it is dealing with organized crime in the City of Winnipeg, and I would be interested in hearing how this position may or may not relate to that one. I cannot be so presumptuous as to know what has worked for the City of Winnipeg, what their analyses have shown.

It may be that this position may not be continued. I do not know if that decision has even been made because from the last remarks that I had in the paper that I saw from Vandal, the chair of the committee that is responsible for the area of protection, was that there had been no final decision made on that position. But I say, you know, it is a municipal position. I would welcome the views of the Chief of Police who is the person's senior or supervisor or the person who this position reports to.

Mrs. Driedger: If the Minister is interested in those views, I am wondering if the Minister has asked somebody in the City whether he, or somebody from his department, has spoken to the Chief. I mean, if we have a provincial government that wants to be tough on the gang issue, that is looking at all facets of trying to address this issue, would it not have been incumbent upon the Minister or somebody from his department to speak with the City or with Chief Ewatski to find out how we can have a most effective gang program or prevention program in the province?

Mr. Mackintosh: The question assumes that we have not had discussions about gang abatement with the City of Winnipeg Chief of Police. In fact, there have been ongoing discussions with the Justice Department and the City of Winnipeg Police Service in terms of how they see law enforcement organized. As well, we have had discussions and we are working with the City of Winnipeg Police Service for an anti-gang program. Aspects of that were announced when we unveiled our 21-person Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit.

Mrs. Driedger: How is the Minister looking at prevention then in the whole area of gangs under his new initiative because certainly there has

been a lot of contacts made by this particular gang prevention co-ordinator, and I am sure there has to be some useful information that has come out of there. I am wondering how the province is addressing the issue of prevention in this area then within that particular proposal.

Mr. Mackintosh: The City of Winnipeg Police Service came to us, and they said that they had prioritized a new program for dealing with street gangs which they called Take Action in Schools. They requested some provincial assistance to allow them to initiate that program. From my understanding, it is similar to the DARE and the GREAT programs in the United States where police officers will go out and speak with school children in the classroom or in school communities.

As well, we understand the City of Winnipeg Police Service has reorganized its law enforcement activities in terms of the identification of street-gang activity after some intensive deliberation and consideration on the part of the Police Service and the Chief of Police.

I might just add, at the provincial level the 21-person Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit will comprise co-ordinators in each of the provincial jails to be on top of the gang situation in terms of the numbers and any recruitment activity that may take place and as well to co-ordinate that information with other people in the unit. As well, the co-ordinators in the institutions share information with the law enforcement agencies as well as the federal correctional facilities. In the Department of Public Safety, we have co-ordinating functions there as well. Wendy Huggan has been very active. Perhaps the Member is aware of her activities. As well, the entire organization of the gang unit speaks to the need for co-ordination and information sharing.

In terms of the work of mobilizing community resources, the Department is planning a community mobilization conference in October to pull together the resources and the insights, the expertise that is available in the community and in community organizations to deal with the threat of street-gang activity.

Those are some of the examples of co-ordination that the Department has been working on. These have been, in part, the result of discussions not only across divisions of the Department but involving law enforcement agencies, and earlier I mentioned the Winnipeg Police Service initiative.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister: What are the gang numbers in Winnipeg now at this current time?

Mr. Mackintosh: You know, I have gone through this—and perhaps I can refer the Member to Hansard—with the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik). It is my understanding, however, just to reiterate, that the current gang numbers in the city of Winnipeg are approximately 1700. That is for street-gang members, if that is the information she was requesting. That information is from the Winnipeg Police Service.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chair, 1700 sounds like it is up from a year ago. Would that be correct?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I would like to go back to looking at Alberta's model for addressing the issue of children involved in prostitution. They changed their legislation there because they found that the Alberta Child Welfare Act did not have the provisions to address sexually exploited children. Therefore, they put forward The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act.

The Act gives the police and child welfare workers the power to take the identified children off the street, with or without their consent, for up to three days. I am wondering if our Department of Justice has had any discussions in that particular area in terms of looking at new legislation in this area or around the concept of setting up a safe house for children involved in prostitution so that children could have a place to go to have a few days to sort of get their head around the fact that they could get out of prostitution, where they could be taught what some of the resources are for them, which would then allow them to make a healthier and a more-informed decision about getting out of prostitution.

I wondered if the Government of Manitoba has done anything in looking at that.

Mr. Mackintosh: As I recall, when the Alberta legislative change was announced, the former Justice Minister was very clear in saying that Manitoba's regime was quite different and there were different techniques being looked at and there is a different legislative framework in Manitoba and then therefore rejected at that time the Alberta approach.

My understanding is that the changes to the Alberta legislation are currently facing a Charter challenge. It will be interesting of course to see the outcome of that. In Manitoba, under The Child and Family Services Act, there is an ability to apprehend a child engaged in this kind of activity. So there are parallels between the legislation here and in Alberta to a certain extent. If there are other legislative tools needed in Manitoba, I certainly for one would be supportive of that.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the Minister be supportive of looking at the concept of setting up a safe house for child prostitutes?

* (17:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as I answered to the Member earlier, we will determine if the application has come in. I have had discussions with people at New Directions for one on this kind of initiative. To me, I find the proposal attractive. In terms of whether I would support a particular initiative or submission would of course depend on the pros and cons, the business case, the finances needed and so on. So I will reserve my determination of that until such a matter would come to Cabinet, given that I need more information before a decision would be made.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the Minister for his willingness to at least look into this issue of a safe house for child prostitutes. It is something I certainly believe that Winnipeg needs. It is something that I think if you listen to the community you would find the community organizations feel it is of value to them.

When one spends any time talking to child prostitutes or children that have had the opportunity to get out of prostitution, I think you will find that it is an idea that is something that they feel would be appealing. I would really encourage the Government of Manitoba to address the issue of a safe house for child prostitutes. I would be very supportive of an initiative like that. Thank you.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I thank the Member for her interest in this issue. I know she has had a history of dealing with Child Find Manitoba. I take her comments as positive. I certainly will pay attention to that proposal and give it my full consideration.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I just have a couple of other questions for the Minister. As I go through my list, I think we have just about covered everything. I gather we will be having a meeting with the RCMP sometime in June and July on the Powerview issue.

The one issue I wanted to raise—by the way, unless something comes out in the next 20 minutes, I expect by six o'clock, Mr. Minister, you will be finished your Estimates today—with you is one that came to my attention in my latter days as Minister of Highways and Transportation. I think it was one of those oversights that occurred when we were in power, my party was in power. We had had a brief discussion about it internally, I guess, in the weeks leading up to the election. I am not sure if any action was taken to correct what I believe is an error, and I am offering gratuitous advice here today to the Minister. That is an area that he, in fact, may want to look at for correction. Some time ago we provided for a victims of crime surcharge on top of fines, if I am not mistaken, where we take a certain percentage of the value of fines that go into a fund. Now, the detail, it has been some time since I looked at this, but would that be correct, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Mackintosh: Now the Criminal Code allows for a surcharge on fines of up to 15 percent.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I believe in Manitoba, and I look to your Deputy, we are collecting 12.5-or-something percent on fines. Where the oversight

occurred was in violations of The Highway Traffic Act, particularly overweight tickets. Mr. Chair, I had a case in my constituency—this is how it came to my attention—last spring where a particular individual was charged with an overweight offence in crossing a bridge. They had a rather significant fine, the court level based on the weight of the vehicle plus the surtax or the surcharge for the victims of crime fund. Why it occurred to me that this was, I think, an oversight is when the government of which I was a part, and I was not Attorney General nor Minister of Highways at the time—but when it was brought in, it was viewed as being a surcharge on, in essence, criminal activity, with those dollars going to assist the victims of that criminal activity.

The problem with the surcharge on overweight offences on The Highway Traffic Act is that the victim is the Department of Highways who has to fix the road, and in essence those fees on overweight—in this particular case the court reduced the fine from \$5,000 to \$500 and there was no damage done to the bridge in question. In fact I am not here to get into specifics but just to tell you why I think it is an inappropriate surcharge is that in this particular case the bridge in question was very much underrated weight wise by the Department. The Department did not want to spend the money or did not have the money to properly weight rate the bridge, and so it remained at a very cautious engineer's weight range which was inadequate for the local community. An individual drove over, was charged. We had it structurally checked; there was no problem.

The fine was reduced, but a large component of the initial fine was the 12.5% surcharge for victims of crime. It occurred to me, in dealing with this case, that the purposes of the surcharge are not being met by levying it on weight infractions under The Highway Traffic Act, and there is a whole area there to be explored, in my view, which I did not have to do in the few brief months I was Minister of Highways and Transportation. But I know on many of my constituents, who have been charged with overweight offences and they went to court, judges have almost invariably reduced those weight-rate charges significantly. Some judges

have even sent the message that the political masters should readjust those fines, being inappropriate for what in fact the offence has been in the circumstances.

But to tag on a 12.5% surcharge for victims of crime on overweight offences under The Highway Traffic Act I do not think is an appropriate view. I can tell the Minister that I brought this to the attention of my colleagues, I believe, in the weeks leading up to the issuing of the writ for the general election, and there was a consensus that this matter would have to be addressed following the election, that it was inappropriate. So I believe it was an oversight, and confirmed to me by the former Attorney General that they had never thought of that area, so I raise it now. I offer gratuitous advice to the Minister because I am sure that, if it is not corrected at some point, the Minister is going to have a number of very angry truckers in their office complaining about the 12.5% surcharge. Remember, again, that sometimes the fees for overweight, the fines are not your \$60 or \$100 or \$200 fines, they are in the thousands, often based on the weight. So the magnitude of the issue becomes greater, is not \$8 or \$9 to the fund, sometimes it is thousands, and again, dollars that are not in any way connected with the offence that had been committed.

So I wanted to raise that with the Minister, and I would be very satisfied if the Minister were to commit today to have a look at this and maybe get back to me at some point. I would hope that he and his colleagues would find it to complete what I began last summer. I am not looking for credit. It is just that I want to acknowledge we found the problem. Elections got in the way. I raise it with him now. He has probably had a thousand things to do between the election and this time, but I raise it with him today as an area that I believe should be corrected.

* (17:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: I can commit to the Member to looking at that. I suppose the challenge, and I am sure the Member has thought of this, is that then it may require a course of determination as to what crimes are victimless or who the victim is in certain crimes, but I will certainly commit

to having the Department look at that and the pros and cons of making change or not in that regard.

Mr. Praznik: Again, having been a former Highways Minister, I am sure the current one and I would be in total agreement that any damage done to highways or roads by overweight that requires repairs or where the road ends up coming out of the Department of Highways budget and is not a matter that some victim of a criminal act has suffered from, so I would appreciate if the Minister could also commit perhaps to provide me with a commentary in writing as to his thoughts and plans after he has had a chance to examine it.

If he would make that commitment, I would then—my colleague for Fort Whyte has a question or two, and then we can wrap it up.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I did not know if the Minister of Justice was going to respond or not.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would be pleased to make that commitment, yes.

Mr. Loewen: Just a brief question regarding the Property Registry. I notice in the revenue Estimates that the Property Registry's estimated increase is budgeted to \$4.5 million from \$2.8 million.

Mr. Mackintosh: If I could interrupt, the Property Registry was transferred out of Justice to Consumer and Corporate Affairs about two years ago—oh, about five years ago. That question and answer would best be with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), who is up after Culture and Heritage.

An Honourable Member: My mistake.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, they moved it over.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Minister for his commitments to do a number of things. There still are issues that we will be pursuing with other ministers, particularly with respect to casinos and safeguarding the public and First Nations interests in that particular area.

I guess the last area I just wanted to touch base on was the Supreme Court case that we had discussed earlier in our Estimates. I wanted to indicate that I gather that there are a number of sensitivities around that particular issue, given that it is now before the Supreme Court.

Would the Minister give us a sense if in his plans, if the Supreme Court voids, overturns the convictions, the Department is considering retrying or requesting a retrial or proceeding again with those charges?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to make it clear, this information I received now from the officials, I have no personal knowledge of the matters that are before the Court. Of course, it is within the purview of the Prosecutions branch entirely and the deputy. I am advised that the plans are to await the outcome of the matter before the Supreme Court of Canada, to then look at the reasons for judgment and not to anticipate one way or the other right now, but as well, aside from the bottom-line finding of the Court is to look to see whether there is some instruction provided and the reasons. If there were further action to be taken, it would also be dependent on the advice from the prosecutor, in particular, who had initial conduct of the matter and to determine the status of the proceedings to date, incarceration to date. So options would be determined from those two sources, namely, one, the reasons for judgment, and second of all, if there was further action, advice from the Crown attorney.

Mr. Praznik: One further question in this area, Mr. Chair. I would just like—in the interests, I think, of the public curiosity—the Minister to confirm that neither he nor any of his colleagues nor any of the political staff of the Government have in any way been involved in this particular matter and that it in fact has been handled by the Prosecutions branch.

Mr. Mackintosh: When it comes to individual prosecutions against individuals, the only way that the political level can determine the course of the prosecutions is by general prosecution policy, which applies generally and without specific regard to a particular case. In this case, in the matter that the Member is now discussing, the information that I am getting is coming from

the Prosecutions branch. There has been no directive, of course, as is the practice historically and currently in Manitoba and elsewhere, that prosecutions are determined on the basis of professional judgment of those in the Prosecutions branch based on the law, the available evidence, and the prosecutions policy, as it may from time to time, affect particular cases, but not specifically directed from the political level.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we know that to be the case, but we also know that the politicians are the ones who are held accountable for those decisions from time to time. But I accept the Minister's statement, and in the interests of those who inquired of me on this matter. I wanted to ensure that was on the record.

Unless anyone else has any questions of you, I have concluded my questioning. I think if you could pass through the line by line, I have no problem with including the Minister's Salary. I do not think necessarily you have to ask the staff to leave. I will waive that privilege, so that we can get it done through. I take it if the Minister of Justice is prepared to agree, and members of the Committee are prepared to agree, once we have concluded this line of Estimates, that this committee will adjourn, and that will allow some of us to depart who have other things we need to do. So, if there is agreement on that, that would be fine.

Mr. Chairperson: It is standard practice to leave 4.1(a) Minister's Salary to the end. Accordingly, we have agreed upon this. We will start with 4.1(b)(1) then.

4.1 Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$480,200–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$81,000–pass.

4.1(c) Prosecutions and Criminal Justice Policy (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$261,100–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$146,800–pass.

4.1(d) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$873,800–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$339,100–pass.

4.1(e) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$819,700–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$193,700–pass.

4.1(f) Computer Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$797,100–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$310,000–pass.

* (17:50)

We will turn to 4.2. Criminal Justice (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$600,600–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$162,000–pass.

4.2.(b) Prosecutions (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$8,189,200–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,906,900–pass; (3) Witness Program \$632,000–pass.

4.2.(c) Provincial Policing \$59,771.700–pass.

4.2.(d) Law Enforcement Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$329,000–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$135,300–pass.

4.2.(e) Public Safety (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,823,200–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$533,900–pass; (3) Grants \$1,061,400–pass.

4.2.(f) Compensation for Victims of Crime (1) Other Expenditures \$3,286,700–pass; (2) Less: Reduction in Actuarial Liability (\$100,000).

4.2.(g) Aboriginal Policing (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$119,800–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$38,500–pass.

4.2.(h) Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$552,400–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,246,900–pass.

4.2.(j) Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$153,500–pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$346,500–pass.

Resolution 4.2.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$80,789,500 for Justice, Criminal Justice, for the fiscal year ending 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.3. Civil Justice (a) Executive Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$138,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$22,700—pass.

4.3.(b) Manitoba Human Rights Commission (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,121,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$403,800—pass.

4.3.(c) Legislative Counsel (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,490,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$363,400—pass.

4.3.(d) Grant to Manitoba Law Reform Commission \$55,000—pass.

4.3.(e) Family Law (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$715,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$132,800—pass.

4.3.(f) Constitutional Law (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$821,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$189,800—pass.

4.3.(g) Legal Aid Manitoba (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$6,828,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$9,794,200—pass.

4.3.(h) Civil Legal Services—there is no amount.

4.3.(j) The Public Trustee—there is no amount.

Resolution 4.3.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,077,600 for Justice, Civil Justice, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Item 4.4. Corrections (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$612,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$339,700—pass.

4.4.(b) Adult Corrections (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$39,045,500—pass; (2) Other

Expenditures \$7,818,900—pass; (3) External Agencies and Halfway Houses \$427,800—pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$80,000).

4.4.(c) Correctional Youth Centres (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$13,536,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,513,800—pass.

4.4.(d) Community Corrections (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$9,423,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,457,500—pass; (3) Program Development \$2,800,500—pass.

Resolution 4.4.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$77,897,000 for Justice, Corrections, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Item 4.5. Courts (a) Court Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,369,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,395,600—pass.

4.5.(b) Winnipeg Courts (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$9,307,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,230,700—pass.

4.5.(c) Regional Courts (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,829,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,655,800—pass.

4.5.(d) Judicial Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$8,694,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,409,000—pass.

Resolution 4.5.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$33,891,800 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.6.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,526,300 for Justice, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered is 4.1 Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$27,300—pass.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,329,800 for Justice, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Justice. As previously agreed, shall the Committee rise?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

LABOUR

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Labour.

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

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Madam Chair, to the Minister. Last week, the Minister in response to my questioning about her department's home page provided a wide-ranging critique of my caucus's Web site. I read from the Minister's comments in Hansard, "I just would like to share the fact that staff this morning perused the Progressive Conservative Web pages." Several moments later, she is quoted as: "I would suggest that there is some major work that needs to be done on the Web site of the Official Opposition." The Minister goes on to say: "So I would just like to say to the Member that perhaps we will share with his staff, or the staff of the Official Opposition, the fact that perhaps they need to monitor their own Web site a little more carefully."

Minister, I must say I took your advice and I shared the information you provided with our

staff. They are greatly appreciative, as someone saved them a great deal of time working through and pinpointing the areas that needed to be updated. As you stated yourself when questioned on who checked the pages, you indicated: "No, no, not by the Minister. As I have explained to the Member, I am a Luddite and therefore not to that point yet." We have a self-proclaimed Luddite as the Minister of Labour.

Our staff and myself would like to thank the individuals who provided this service to us, Madam Minister. Who are the individuals from your department who were involved in this?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Madam Chair, it was a member of the caucus staff.

Mr. Schuler: Would the Minister give us the name of that person who provided the assistance from the caucus staff?

Ms. Barrett: I am not sure which caucus staff-person it was. I am not quite sure why it is so critical that we have the name, but if the Member is insistent I will endeavour to find out who it was.

Mr. Schuler: If the Minister could table that, that would be fine.

To the Minister, those individuals or individuals certainly merit a note of thanks for their hard work. Does the Minister routinely use staff for opposition research?

Ms. Barrett: I believe what transpired, and this happened while we were in Estimates, is that Estimates were being monitored, as they are, and the staffperson decided to check the Official Opposition Web site. I believe it must have taken, oh, maybe two or three minutes to pull up the pages that were referenced by myself in last week's Estimates. So I did not give explicit instructions, but staff for the caucus and the ministers' offices monitor Estimates to ensure that they know what is happening in each of the three committees on a regular basis, as was the case in the former government.

Mr. Schuler: As the Minister has stated, and I quote out of Hansard: I have explained to the

Member that I have taken responsibility for the failing of the Minister's home page.

However, Minister, it is not your responsibility to take responsibility for any other Web page in your capacity as minister. Does the Minister think it is appropriate to use departmental staff to do her dirty work for her?

Ms. Barrett: I take exception, and I would like the Chair to call the Member to order. Number one, he is inaccurate. He did not listen to my answer to the first question. It was not departmental staff; it was caucus staff that monitored the Estimates and pulled up on the Web page, the Opposition Web pages that I spoke about. It is not, under any circumstances, "dirty work." So I would please ask the Member to choose his words very carefully and apologize to the NDP caucus staff, who only did what the Member's staff did in looking at our Web pages.

I would like to ask the Member to please apologize for using the phrase "dirty work."

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister not think it is only fair to extend the same courtesy to the Liberal caucus as she did to our caucus, going in and perhaps extending the courtesy of critiquing their pages as well?

Ms. Barrett: We are spending the people's time and money, and a great deal of time and money, dealing with issues that have absolutely no bearing, very little bearing on the Department of Labour's Estimates, especially when we are going over and over the same issues that were dealt with last week.

I am sure that caucus looks at, and departmental staff, but I think probably in the case of the Liberal Web page it would be the caucus staff that would monitor that. But in the context of the line of questioning, the line of discussion that went on last week, the caucus staff felt that it would bear some investigating to see if it was only the Department of Labour whose minister's statement was not up to date.

By the way, I might add that the MLA for Inkster, which I am, my biography is and has been for many months up to date. The

biographies were what I was referencing when I raised the issue of Web site maintenance.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister not think that the time of the individuals involved might have been better spent ensuring the Department of Labour site was fully up to date?

Ms. Barrett: Will the Member, if he is going to waste the people's time dealing with these extraneous matters, at least not just read his questions but pay attention to the answers that are given by the Minister. I have said already twice that it was not Department of Labour staff that looked at the Progressive Conservative biographies, it was the NDP caucus staff. Are you aware of the difference?

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister. As I am sure you are aware, I am the critic of Labour for our caucus. You are the Minister of Labour, the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) is the deputy critic for Labour. Minister, you are paid to be a Minister, we are paid to be critics. Is it your responsibility to act as a critic for our members which you are not paid to do?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated in an earlier answer, I did not direct anyone to look at the Progressive Conservative Web page. That was done by a caucus staff member and must have taken about 3 or 4 minutes to do. I can find out how much time was spent on bringing up and printing off these Web pages with the biographies of the Progressive Conservative members. I do think it is important that information on Web pages, as the Member stated several times last week, be accurate. It is important that information on Web pages be accurate not only for the Government members but for Opposition.

I guess, I might say that perhaps the Progressive Conservative critic, Deputy critic, caucus staff, whoever spent the time to go through our Web site, should take a look at maintenance of their own Web site. I think another thing to say is that this is new technology, we all are prone to not keeping things as up-to-date as they might be. I just felt that it was an interesting thing that—an old saying springs to mind—perhaps people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I just wanted to let the Member know that it was not

just the ministerial statement, not the departmental real guts of the department's work which I stated several times as up-to-date, but the Minister's Web page that I took responsibility for not having updated.

My biography is updated, far more updated than several of the members in the Opposition, and that is the point.

* (14:50)

Mr. Schuler: When I asked the Minister is it your responsibility to act as a critic for the Member, say, for instance, from Ste. Rose or from Seine River or River East, are you paid to do so?

Ms. Barrett: I was merely raising information, bringing information to the Member's attention which he may not have had. I think it is my responsibility as a member of the Legislature which I also am—not just a minister but I am a member of the Legislature—that to ensure that we all are aware as MLAs that it is important to keep our technological data bases and our technological information as up-to-date as possible. I guess, I could say, I was just merely sharing for information the—

An Honourable Member: She was just surfing?

An Honourable Member: She is a Luddite. She does not surf.

Ms. Barrett: Do not go there, sir, because if you go there, you are going to—do not go there.

Madam Chairperson: Could I please remind the members to speak through the Chair?

Ms. Barrett: I am sorry, Madam Chair.

Mr. Schuler: My last comment, Madam Chair, on this unfortunate display by the Minister who really should have known better. During your comments about our caucus's site, you stated: "Just as a parenthetical comment, the new appellation for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation"—and I am quoting here—"is not MPIC but MPI. We are leaving off the corporation." Actually, this contradicts what the Minister said the day before in the House. From

Hansard I quote: "Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the following report, the Annual Report for the Year 1999 for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation."

So, just as a parenthetical comment, Minister, please do not say one thing to this Committee and say another thing to the House. I was wondering if the Minister would like to comment on that.

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Back to the Executive Support, if I could ask the Minister if she would just go back there. It is about the \$10,000 grant line. It was for an unemployed help centre, correct?

Ms. Barrett: The Community Unemployed Help Centre.

Mr. Schuler: On March 24, 2000, I wrote a letter to the Minister asking if her government was planning to fund unemployment help centres as called for by resolution 00JE-32 at the NDP convention, which was held March 3 to 5. It reads: In particular resolution OOJE-32, entitled Unemployed Help Centre Funding, introduced by the Brandon East NDP and the Brandon West NDP, calls for the Manitoba Government to fund unemployment help centres in Brandon, Winnipeg and other centres in Manitoba.

Can you tell me if your government is planning to fund these unemployed help centres in Brandon and other communities in Manitoba? The resolution, I will read the last part: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Government fund unemployed help centres in Brandon, Winnipeg and other centres in Manitoba. That is by the Brandon East NDP and the Brandon West NDP.

Your assistant responded on the 28th, but no answer was contained in the response. Could you now explain whether this grant was initiated by the Unemployed Help Centre or your government on the prompt of this resolution?

Point of Order

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Well, Madam Chairman, I tried to get your attention

several times. I am sorry you did not happen to look my way. It was on the previous little debate between the Member for Springfield and the Minister. I do not know if there is a point of order or not, but I would like to raise it anyway, perhaps more for clarification than for anything else. The Member seems to be—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

An Honourable Member: He is on a point of order. Do not interrupt.

Mr. Schuler: Would you ask the Member, either he has a point of order or a question? Just for clarification, I did not understand.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, would you mind waiting next time until I recognize you also?

Mr. Schuler: I would like to have clarification. If the Member has a point of order, then he should state so. If this is merely a clarification or going off on a tangent, I do not think that is appropriate. If he has a question or if it is a point of order, then I could understand.

Madam Chairperson: On the point of order, the Member for Springfield does not have a point of order. I would ask if the Member for Flin Flon has a point of order.

Mr. Jennissen: I think I had a point of order. The Member for Springfield was alleging that there was something faintly unethical about checking somebody's Web site or dabbling into the history of a particular group or party or whatever.

I would like to point out, Madam Chair, that not too long ago the Member for Tuxedo, the then-Leader of the Conservative Party, held up a newspaper article, a picture of the Minister of Education 25- or 20-some years ago, I do not know the exact date, when he was allegedly carrying a sign in front of the Legislature. If his then-Leader can delve into the past of members of the Legislature, what is wrong with checking a modern Web site? That is all I want to say.

Mr. Schuler: I think the Member across is very confused. Maybe he came in halfway through the discussion. In fact, one of the questions I

asked, and at a later date the Member can sit down and fully apprise himself to the whole conversation if in fact he was not here for all of it, because Hansard will clearly lay out that that was not the point that I was making. In fact, I believe at one point in time I even thanked the Minister and asked if we could find out which staffer had in fact helped out our Web site to the point that we were going to send a letter and congratulate them and thank them for it. I think the point was if that is an appropriate use of departmental money. That was basically the question.

I do not believe the Member has a point of order. Rather I think he was just a little too eager and energetic to get into the debate. I am sure there will be ample time for him to ask the Minister questions. He need not use a point of order to do that.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) did not have a point of order. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that a point of order should be used to draw the Chair's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language.

A point of order should not be used to ask a question, dispute the accuracy of facts, clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood, or raise a further point of order.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: Moving on to the questions?

Madam Chairperson: Yes.

* (15:00)

Mr. Schuler: I had asked the Minister a question before the point of order came up and the question basically got to, and I will just read it again, if I may: Can you explain whether this grant was initiated by the Unemployed Community Help Centre or your government on the prompting of the resolution that I read into the record?

Ms. Barrett: No. It was not prompted by the resolution.

Mr. Schuler: On the centre's Web site it states that it received funding under the last NDP government. Could the Minister tell us how much those grants may have been?

Ms. Barrett: No, I cannot.

Mr. Schuler: The site goes on to say it prepares an annual report for the Department of Labour. Could the Minister table this report, please?

Ms. Barrett: We will endeavour to table that for the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Just on that, could that be before the Estimates for Labour come to an end?

Ms. Barrett: That is completely in the hands of the critic as to when the Estimates for the Department of Labour will be at an end. We will endeavour to find any reports that the Unemployed Community Help Centre has given to the Department and table as quickly as we can.

Mr. Schuler: As well, the centre submitted a brief to the Minimum Wage Review Board. Could the Minister please table that report, that brief?

Ms. Barrett: The past practice for presentations before boards such as the Minimum Wage Board, when someone has asked for one of the presentations to be made public to them, has been to ask the organization that made the presentation if they are prepared to release their presentation. We will endeavour to ask the Community Unemployed Help Centre whether or not they have an objection to the release of their presentation to the Minimum Wage Board. If they do not, then we will release that information to the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, the Web site says that the centre is an independent agency. For the Minister's information, the centre has a 15-member board of directors, of which the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Winnipeg Labour Council, the Winnipeg Building and Construction Trades Council directly appoint three of these individuals. As well, Heather Grant-Jury is the president of both the Winnipeg Labour Council and the Community Unemployed Help Centre.

Also for the Minister's information, the centre is located at 275 Broadway, which, I believe, is the Union Centre. The site also mentions that it does receive funding from various labour organizations.

Minister, the resolution calls for funding to be extended to other similar organizations. Is this the plan of the Minister?

Ms. Barrett: At this point, we have received no requests for funding for other unemployed help centres. So that is the current status.

Mr. Schuler: Back to the brief that was submitted by the centre to the minimum wage review board. I take it then that all of those briefs are not made public?

Ms. Barrett: The Minimum Wage Board is an advisory board to the Minister, as we have discussed several days ago. So the information that is provided to the Minimum Wage Board and through the Minimum Wage Board to the Minister is advisory in nature and therefore not as a matter of course made public.

If the Member himself wishes to contract the Community Unemployed Help Centre and ask for their brief to the Minimum Wage Board, I am sure that would be possible. But, as I said in an earlier answer, I will endeavour to find out if the Community Unemployed Help Centre is willing to have the brief that they prepared for the Minimum Wage Board in I believe it was 1996 be released to the Member.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister: Is this kind of information available through The Freedom of Information Act?

Ms. Barrett: It is our understanding, staff's understanding that this material would come under the rubric of advice to the Minister and is therefore not made public under Freedom of Information either.

Mr. Schuler: Currently are there any other applications being considered in the same line as the Community Unemployed Health Centre?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, under Mechanical and Engineering, I would like to ask the Minister, as she may be aware or may not, there is a petroleum refinery located in the Rural Municipality of East St. Paul. My question in this section will focus around this particular aspect of the Mechanical and Engineering branch of the Department. Under Activity Identification, the inspection of gas, oil and propane installations is mentioned. Can the Minister provide some information on how this is done, who carries it out, what are the costs involved?

* (15:10)

Ms. Barrett: Before I attempt the answer to the question, I am wondering if the Member can tell me if he has completed his questioning under Labour Management Services division. The reason I am asking is that it is normal that in the Estimates process, once you have completed that you go through a series of questions, so that the staff in a different division that has already been discussed do not have to stay around and can go back to their duties.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister on this, Madam Chair, through you. We are prepared now to move through Mechanical Engineering and move on for now. So, yes, we concur with the Minister on that.

Ms. Barrett: By the way, I would like to introduce at the table here, again, Geoff Bawden who is the Executive Director for Workplace Safety and Health, and Judy Fraser who is the Director of Operations for Mechanical and Engineering.

In the Mechanical and Engineering division, we do not inspect refineries as such; we inspect vessels. So we would inspect the pressure vessels at the refinery. We also deal more with propane and natural gas, but in a situation such as a large apartment block or some other facility that is heated with oil, we would inspect the oil heating device, but it is the inspection of the pressure vessels. My understanding is the Member was talking about the refinery itself. We have nine boiler and pressure vessel inspectors, and their salary range is between \$38,450 and \$46,147. So I do not

believe I can get any more detail as to what a specific inspection would cost.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, section 2 (3) of The Gas and Oil Burner Act deals with the compliance with minimum standards, and if it so please the committee, it reads: "Compliance with minimum standards. 2(3) No person shall keep, store, distribute, deliver, dispose of any liquefied petroleum unless the design and construction of every tank, container or other device and place used for keeping, storing, transferring, carrying or disposal of liquefied petroleum complies with the minimum standards prescribed by the regulations."

I was wondering if the Minister could briefly describe what some of the minimum standards would be.

Ms. Barrett: Actually, maybe I will just generally ask the Member to take a look at the Annual Report 1998-99, where it speaks to the inspections under some of the acts, the ones that have inspection components to them, pages 33 and 34 that deal with inspection programs, under Workplace Safety and Health, Amusements Act, Electricians' Licence Act, Elevator Act, Gas and Oil Burner Act and Steam and Pressure Plants Act, and if the Member does not have a copy of the annual report—although I do believe I spoke about the annual report and information that was available in the annual report several days ago in Estimates—I would suggest that he ask our office and we would be glad to give him a copy and perhaps some of the questions that he has today would be answered in pages 33 and 34 of that report.

Mr. Schuler: Through you, Madam Chair, and certainly we appreciate through the Minister from the Department how it is that we access a lot of this information is very helpful. I think I have mentioned on previous occasions that I am not just a new MLA to this Legislature but also new at being a critic, so how you access various information and where it is housed, where it is placed, certainly found that the Web site to be one place to start, but there is a lot of information that comes from different areas. So again I appreciate when the Minister does point out and her department points out where it is that we can access that vast area. I appreciate it.

So I would like to ask the next question: How does the process for issuing permits for these installations work?

Ms. Barrett: All installations have to be done by licensed gas fitters and the licensed gas fitter is the individual who applies to the Mechanical and Engineering Branch of the Department of Labour for a permit to install that gas appliance. There is a charge for the permit, and it is based on the size of the appliance, so a small home gas water heater would be approximately \$30 and a gas water heater for a large apartment block would be correspondingly more expensive. Then the installation is inspected by Mechanical and Engineering staff before the appliance is officially turned on.

Mr. Schuler: With respect to the inspections of boilers, pressure vessels and refrigerator systems, some are inspected annually and others biannually. Why the difference?

* (15:20)

Ms. Barrett: Before I answer the second question, I must let the Member know that I was only partially right in my earlier statement when I said that before any gas appliance is turned on it is inspected by Mechanical and Engineering. Usually in a small home situation the utility would inspect and Mechanical and Engineering would inspect the larger appliances, so I wanted to make that correction.

The distinction between the reason for a yearly versus a biannual inspection is safety. Any vessel that is run by steam or has steam as a component is inspected annually because you can well imagine the potential for disaster there if something is wrong with a steam appliance, and other appliances that are not as susceptible to safety hazards are inspected every two years.

Mr. Schuler: I sense the Minister is having somewhat as much difficulty with the answers as I am. This is a fairly technical area, and again I really do appreciate the technical responses that are coming back. It certainly helps us understand how the whole department works. So through you, Minister, and to you and your department, thank you very much for that answer.

The division collects revenues from issuing the various types of licences it is responsible for. How much is collected on an annual basis?

Ms. Barrett: In the Department of Finance, Supplementary Revenues will have these detailed, but the largest revenue sources are \$330,000 from electricians' examinations and licences; \$920,000 under licences, examinations and permits under The Gas and Oil Burner Act; \$600,000 under boiler pressure vessels and refrigeration inspections; and \$465,000, that is fees. Those are the large ones, some of the—oh, elevator permits, \$400,000. The others are quite a bit smaller. There is a total revenue generated in the Mechanical and Engineering branch of about \$2.5 million.

Mr. Schuler: Just on that, is that basic recovery or is that you are actually taking in more than it costs you to do the inspections?

Ms. Barrett: It is recovery.

Mr. Schuler: So to do all of these inspections actually costs \$2.5 million?

Ms. Barrett: This is one of these areas that is difficult to quantify and budget for accurately each year because some of the permits and the licensing are done cyclically. So it will come up every four years, and you cannot tell how much money you are going to make each year; how many licences you are going to hand out, or how many inspections you are going to do.

Another element is the economic cycle. So, if you have an economic building boom, a construction boom, you are likely to have more revenue coming in. If you have a downturn you are likely to have less revenue coming in. But it virtually never makes money. It is based on a cost recovery, so it is sometimes not quite a hundred percent cost recovery, but it is close to it. It is not a net revenue generator in any context.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, I mentioned earlier on about the petroleum refinery. I think it is more of a storage location that Esso has on Henderson Highway in the R.M. of East St. Paul. I do not know if the Minister is aware of it, but fire protection for this facility has recently

been withdrawn by the City of Winnipeg. Just for the record, I think it was a very poor decision on their part, because unlike what the Minister was talking about, a revenue neutral program, the City actually made money on this. I think there was another facility that they extended fire coverage to. I think that was the federal government's research facility out beyond St. Norbert. In either case, the petroleum facility on Henderson Highway in the R.M. of East St. Paul now does not have City of Winnipeg fire department coverage. I suspect neither do they go out and they inspect periodically. This is obviously of some great concern and I am sure it is of great concern to the Minister and her department.

In cases like this, would inspections be stepped up to ensure continued safety?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, we inspect regularly according to the regulations and anticipate continuing to do so. I am told that while the City does not extend fire service to this particular location as a first responder, it would be the backup if there were a fire there. That is my understanding. So the local municipality would have first responder requirements but that the City would back them up if required.

* (15:30)

Mr. Schuler: I would like to thank the Minister for that answer. That starts to give me some comfort. I am sure that the citizens of the Rural Municipality of East St. Paul will also be pleased to hear that. Minister, is that a written agreement, is there an agreement somewhere that they would come in as second responders or if called in by the Rural Municipality? How would it be triggered that they would then respond?

Ms. Barrett: This is an item that should probably more appropriately be addressed under the Office of the Fire Commissioner which is further down in the Estimates book. This would come under the mutual-aid agreements that are signed by various municipalities, recognizing that, particularly in rural areas and northern areas where the distances are extensive, a farmstead could be just inside a municipal boundary so technically would be the responsibility of municipal authority A but be actually closer to

the fire hall of municipal authority B. So mutual-aid districts recognize those geographical realities, and that is the kind of situation that would apply here. Not only that, in this particular case, if the first responder were unable to deal with the situation, then the mutual-aid process would come into play and the signatories would respond.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this committee: Is there a mutual-aid agreement between the R.M. of East Paul and the City of Winnipeg?

Ms. Barrett: Again this is something that should be addressed under the Office of the Fire Commissioner element division in the Estimates.

Mr. Schuler: I thank the Minister for that, and certainly the questions she cannot answer right now, we will bring up later on under that section. Again, the reason why we are asking it here is simply because it seems to come under The Gas and Oil Burner Act, and I had read the section of the Act, so that is why we were bringing it up here. Certainly the question that I just posed I will bring up later on.

I guess my question then is: When was the last time the facility was inspected?

Ms. Barrett: That is information that we will get staff to look at and look for and return with the specifics. Again it would be inspected according to the types of vessels that are in the refinery or the holding facility or whatever the definition of that location is and would have been inspected according to the regulations. We will get that information for the Member.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to thank the Minister. And, just on that, when the time comes and we do have the Office of the Fire Commissioner here, my concern is, Minister, having a lot of family out there and living out there myself, it was about a year and a half ago, two years ago that Paddon Florists had a fire which was not really that far from the oil storage tanks. In fact it was a safe distance enough away—but it was pretty close—and the fire was clearly out of hand. The volunteers certainly tried their hardest in containing the fire, Madam Minister, but were having a great degree of difficulty because there

was no access to water. They truck it in, they pump it into a pond, and then from the pond they pump it out. Just not a chance, not a chance that they could actually control this fire.

The oil storage tanks that we are speaking about, Minister, are actually wedged between a development that is a fairly strong and growing development of houses on the one side and what Manitoba Hydro has, a 250 line going through and a 500-kilowatt line going through. In fact they are even proposing more, which, I hope, this government will reconsider. But it is actually wedged right between there, and should that oil storage facility ever have a fire in it—again, this will be something that we will ask later on and bring to the attention of the Fire Commissioner. If there is not a second response forthcoming very quickly, then to try to contain it will be a nightmare.

I would like to point out to the Minister as well and for the record, it is one the east side of Henderson Highway, and just across the tracks there is some housing and then there is a park which has a boat dock in it. If the tanks were to rupture, even though you do have the berm, but the berm is only so strong, and you get some of that oil flowing and whatever else is stored there, it will head right for the river. I think there is an environmental impact there as well. So that is why we brought the whole issue under the compliance with minimal standards. Certainly we will be raising more questions as we get, in the Department, under the section of the Fire Commissioner's office. So I will leave the rest of my questions on that particular issue for later on.

I would like to bring up one more issue under this section, and that is under the pay equity. I believe that comes under—no, I think that moves on to our next section which is Conciliation, Mediation, and Pay Equity Services. I would like to ask a question in this section.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the Committee to take a 5 to 10-minute recess? Five minute recess? *[Agreed]*

The Committee recessed at 3:38 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 3:48 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: The Committee of Supply please come to order. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, to the Minister. On April 14 I wrote to ask her if she intended to follow through with the Resolution 00EQ-56 entitled "Pay Equity and Affirmative Action" from the NDP convention in Brandon, held on March 3–5, 2000. In the letter I asked the Minister—00EQ-56 entitled "Pay Equity and Affirmative Action" was introduced by The Maples NDP. This resolution calls for the strengthening and reaffirming of the NDP's policies on pay equity and affirmative action.

Can you tell me if your government will be strengthening pay equity and affirmative action in Manitoba? If so, will you be implementing Manitoba hiring requirements for businesses in Manitoba?

Just for the record, Madam Chair, I think it would be worthwhile to just read for the Minister exactly what it is that the Resolution says, and that is 00EQ-56:

WHEREAS the New Democratic Party has some of the strongest policies on pay equity and affirmative action; and

WHEREAS policies require adjustments to strengthen its ability to meet its objectives from time to time;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New Democratic Government strengthen and reaffirm its policies in pay equity and affirmative action. The Maples NDP.

I did get a reply from the Minister's assistant, but it was just your very basic canned response—actually did not contain an answer. So I would like to ask the Minister: Can you tell this Committee if your government will be strengthening pay equity and affirmative action in Manitoba?

* (15:50)

Ms. Barrett: As the Member knows, I am also the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission. These issues can come up in that context as well. In response to the question, we are working very hard to ensure that all of the members of the civil service in particular have—sorry—that the civil service reflect the diversity that is Manitoba, and that we strengthen our resolve and our commitment to increase and to improve our performance as a government and as managers in the civil service to reflect the designated groups, as it were, which are women, visible minorities, disabled, and Aboriginal. I have spoken with individuals in the Civil Service Commission. The Premier has made a commitment that this is a very important element for us. So we are beginning the work on that and definitely confirm our principles about affirmative action and employment equity.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister, that is very interesting. In the past months we have seen the freeze come off of the hiring freeze that the Government proposed, and we will not even go there. Several hundred-plus individuals were hired, and I would like to ask the Minister—she brought up multicultural diversity: How many of the individuals that were hired were of an ethnocultural background?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, that question would be more appropriately addressed to the Civil Service Commission, which is, at this point, the second to last Estimates in the Chamber. The staff will then have that specific information available. This is not a Department of Labour initiative per se.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Schuler: I am sure the Minister has spoken on occasion with Mr. Wade Williams, who is very concerned about this particular issue. Has the Minister had an opportunity to speak to Mr. Wade Williams about this inherent lack of, as he puts it, people of colour, being hired by the current government?

Ms. Barrett: I speak with Mr. Williams regularly on this and other issues.

Mr. Schuler: Has the Minister come to any resolution on this particular issue? He seemed to have some serious concerns in regard to the hiring practices of the current government.

Ms. Barrett: I have stated in an earlier response that we are committed to affirmative action and employment equity and having the civil service as much as possible reflect the diversity that is Manitoba and that the specifics of those questions are better addressed in the Civil Service Estimates.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell us if her government is planning on implementing mandatory hiring requirements for businesses in Manitoba?

Ms. Barrett: At this point, that is not in view of the Government.

Mr. Schuler: One of the things that did come out of the Minister's party was the feel that there should be a strengthening of pay equity and affirmative action. Does the Minister find there are weaknesses in the current system, and what might they be?

Ms. Barrett: I believe that it would be more appropriate to answer these—well, no, I am sorry, the question was were there weaknesses in the pay equity legislation or in the pay equity system at this point. Was that the question?

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): The Honourable Member, or the Member for Springfield.

An Honourable Member: He is honourable.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, that is fine. You did get there.

Can the Minister tell us if she finds there are weaknesses in the Act? Are there any weaknesses in the system, and what might those weaknesses be?

Ms. Barrett: I think the Member is confusing two concepts, the concept of pay equity and the concept of employment equity. Pay equity is part of this sub-appropriation, and that is to ensure there is equal pay for work of equal value.

Employment equity is the principle that states, as I have stated it here for our government in Manitoba, the civil service should reflect the diversity that is Manitoba. The employment equity issues are more appropriately addressed to the Civil Service Commission. Pay equity issues are issues that I am more than happy to address in these Estimates at this point in time.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to thank the Minister for pointing out that there seems to be some confusion. I would suggest maybe the confusion is on behalf of The Maples' NDP, because it does state: "WHEREAS the New Democratic Party has some of the strongest policies on pay equity and affirmative action; and, WHEREAS policies require adjustments to strengthen its ability to meet its objectives from time to time," does the Minister feel that there is a need to strengthen pay equity, and in what areas might that be?

Ms. Barrett: The pay equity legislation was passed unanimously in 1985 under the former NDP government and was the first proactive pay equity legislation in Canada. It covers the provincial civil service and includes teaching and non-teaching staff in the three community colleges, the Crown corporations, the four universities and the 23 largest health care facilities. A number of school divisions have subsequently agreed to voluntarily negotiate pay equity with their employees, and as well, pay equity has been included in a collective agreement between the Manitoba Nurses' Union and Manitoba Health organizations. Pay equity has also been negotiated through a number of other collective agreements.

Pay equity activities were completed in the fall of 1994, approximately nine years after the legislation. The last five of the 27 school divisions who voluntarily agreed to implement pay equity completed their negotiations, and the Pay Equity Bureau was not allocated an operating budget beyond 1993-94. My understanding of the pay equity legislation is that it has been honoured in both principle and implementation and that the pay equity situation within the civil service and the school divisions and other organizations has been quite successful. As I stated, many collective agreements have pay equity as part of their principles

which, I would imagine, if we did an historical analysis, might not have been the case 15 or 20 years ago. I believe the pay equity legislation has lived up, and far surpassed in some cases, its design.

Mr. Schuler: Then to the Minister, there will be no further changes to the pay equity legislation, or any need to strengthen it any further.

* (16:00)

Ms. Barrett: The pay equity legislation, as I stated, has been very effective, we believe in dealing with the civil service and dealing with many of the school divisions and health care facilities and other contracts in both public and private sector negotiations that have been undertaken between workers and management. We feel there is the need to maintain the legislation so that people know that we are committed to pay equity. For the scope of the original legislation, we feel it has been very successful. We recognize that pay equity itself will not be successfully concluded until all workers have equal pay for work of equal value. But as far as the pay equity legislation is concerned, it has been a very successful piece of legislation and continues to provide the services.

Mr. Schuler: Is the Minister, through her department, planning to make the pay equity apply to all workers in Manitoba?

Ms. Barrett: Not at this time.

Mr. Schuler: Does she see that as being something that she would, through you, Madam Chair, like to do within the mandate of this particular government?

Ms. Barrett: We have been working with the private sector, as I stated, through contract negotiations. Many of them now have pay equity provisions within them. We would like to continue to work with the private sector on a voluntary basis to ensure that pay equity as a principle is part of the way businesses do business in Manitoba. I think as we come into the new millennium, if I can use that well overworked phrase, it is only basic fairness as well as, I believe, good business sense to ensure that people who are doing the same job or work

that has equal value should be paid the same no matter what the job description might be or the gender of the person occupying that job.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister believe that there is a problem in the private sector, that this is not the case, and that she would like to see this rectified?

Ms. Barrett: I think that we have been working quite well with many private sector businesses, but I am sure that there are situations where pay equity is not completely implemented. We would like to continue to work with all employers and all businesses and all unions so that it is one of those things that you just sort of automatically put into a contract or that you automatically see when you are making your business's budget, that people who do work of equal value should be paid an equal wage.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Can this minister tell me how many school divisions have pay equity policies in the province of Manitoba?

Ms. Barrett: Twenty-seven school divisions have voluntarily agreed to implement pay equity.

Mrs. Smith: Could this minister tell us: Were they implemented by the divisions alone or by the prompting of the Department?

Ms. Barrett: The Pay Equity Bureau was put in place to work with voluntary groups such as school divisions to implement pay equity. The Pay Equity Bureau was not allocated an operating budget beyond 1993-1994 because of the successful conclusion of the last of the 27 school divisions who had voluntarily agreed to implement pay equity completed their negotiations. So the Pay Equity Bureau, while it was in existence, provided assistance for school divisions and other groups that wanted to voluntarily provide pay equity.

That bureau position, the Acting Director of the Pay Equity Bureau, was moved to a position in the Conciliation and Mediation Services Branch of the Department of Labour in the early '90s. We still provide information upon request by both public groups such as school boards and school divisions and also private sector

companies and businesses who have requests about pay equity.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, does this minister foresee the remaining divisions implementing pay equity in the future?

Ms. Barrett: The process with school divisions was voluntary, and it remains voluntary. So school divisions can in their contract negotiations implement pay equity, discuss this with their teachers and other staff. The Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services branch is certainly willing to help and assist in any way they can if school divisions want to go that route, but it is still, as it always has been, voluntary.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, through you to the Minister, until this point in time it has been voluntary. Is the Department or the Minister considering legislation that would see to it that the rest of the school divisions then have a pay equity policy?

Ms. Barrett: At this point we are not considering that, but if we did, we certainly would not do any legislation without consultation. We believe at this point the voluntary compliance has been quite successful. As I said, the goal is to have all workers paid a fair wage for the work that they do. We need to ensure that cultural or gender differences do not cloud the issue when determining the value of a person's occupation.

* (16:10)

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, in regard to pay equity in relation to the private sector or the school divisions, has the Minister had any discussions with her department in regard to the potential of drafting legislation to make basically all those workers be under a pay equity policy?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Under the Activity Identification on page 28, and then down, alternative, almost to the second to last point, alternative methods of preventive mediation, like mutual gains bargaining, to the Minister, what other alternative methods are being explored and have they been implemented with any success?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Basically the mutual-gains bargaining or interest-based negotiations is the category is being seen now as an alternative to the traditional collective bargaining process, which was quite adversarial in nature, where management would be on one side, they would bring their first opening position and labour would bring their first opening position, and they were the lines in the sand. This has been the traditional method of bargaining for decades.

Interest-based bargaining looks at it from a different way, looks at it from, we all want the same thing, we want to have a productive workplace where employees will stay around, where they feel that they are valued and that their interests are looked after. Employers want the same thing because it is in their best interests to have a safe and productive workplace. So interest-based bargaining looks at win-win rather than win-lose. It is fairly new in concept.

The federal government has done a lot of work in this regard. What we are doing is getting facilitators from our division trained by the federal government. Then they go in and where there is a willingness on the part of management and labour to start this interest-based bargaining or to investigate it or to try and utilize it, then the people from our department go in there and attempt to work through this. It is fairly new.

There are other provinces that are doing similar things. So what our division is doing is they are monitoring the implementation of this in other jurisdictions and seeing if there is anything, you know, they have little wrinkles that are coming about, any other kinds of tinkering, if you will, or adjustments that could be made. But at this point, the large, overarching category of alternative preventative mediation or bargaining is the mutual-gains bargaining or the interest-based negotiations.

Chairperson's Ruling

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I have a ruling for the Committee.

On Thursday, June 8, 2000, I took under advisement a point of order raised in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room

255. The point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) referred to the personal nature of comments made in debate by the Honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett). The Honourable Minister of Labour also spoke to the point of order. I thank both honourable members for their contribution to the point of order.

I must rule that there was no point of order. However, let me take this opportunity to respectfully remind all honourable members on both sides of the table to please address their questions through the Chair. One of the basic principles of our procedure is that proceedings be conducted in a free and civil discourse. To this end, members are less apt to engage in direct heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed to the Chair, rather than to another member.

I respectfully ask for the co-operation of all honourable members in this matter.

* * *

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, going back to pay equity in school divisions, the Minister was referring to the fact that there would be consultation and part of this consulting with different shareholders.

What types of consultation will the Minister employ in terms of the pay equity? Will the Minister consult with parent councils, teachers, parents, staff? What types of consultation will take place?

Ms. Barrett: I need to put a correction on the record. I did not say we were looking at legislation. I said that, if we were to look at any changes to the pay equity legislation, we would, of course, undertake consultation. But at this time we have absolutely no intention of introducing any pay equity legislation, amendments or changes. So I want to make that crystal clear for all members of the Committee that there is no government activity in this regard contemplated.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, under Expected Results, is the Department meeting the results that have been quantified in that section?

Ms. Barrett: We are pretty much bang on with those percentages as identified in the Expected Results section.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, there are roughly 250 collective agreements expiring in Manitoba this year. How many of these collective agreements is the Department currently involved with?

Ms. Barrett: On May 1, the division was involved in conciliation with 84 collective agreements. Now the number is slightly higher at this point, but we will have to get the updated figure for the Member if he wishes. But, on May 1, it was 84 collective agreements that were in conciliation.

Mr. Schuler: Of those approximately 84, how many employees would that cover?

* (16:20)

Ms. Barrett: That information is not here at this point, but we should be able to get it for the Member very shortly.

Mr. Schuler: We await that information as soon as it arrives. I appreciate that. To the Minister, how many mediators can the Department call upon?

Ms. Barrett: There are five mediators on staff and then there is one support staff who supports those five. So, there are five staff mediators available to work.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, Madam Chair, are there any mediators who, like our mutual friend Wally Fox-Decent, are involved in the vast number of situations?

Ms. Barrett: Currently, we have four mediation appointments under The Labour Relations Act, of people who are outside the civil service. Mr. Fox-Decent has been or is mediating in the majority of the cases that have gone to external mediation.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could this Minister tell me if the Government plans to repeal the part of The Public Schools Act dealing with teacher

bargaining and place teachers under The Labour Relations Act?

Ms. Barrett: I will be delighted to tell the Member that in the fullness of time when the legislation is tabled before the House.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in all due respect, there have been public announcements by this government, and it would please the Committee if the Minister would not play coy and just answer the question.

Ms. Barrett: The Minister just did answer the question.

Mrs. Smith: In the event that the Minister repeals Bill 72 and it is placed under The Labour Relations Act, or the intent is to place it under The Labour Relations Act, could the Minister please outline what kind of collaboration and conciliation will be done with the shareholders in the school divisions, specifically the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the taxpayers across Manitoba and all the shareholders involved?

Ms. Barrett: As I said in my earlier answer, the issue about the housing of any amendments or changes to Bill 72, as it is known, will be made public when the legislation is tabled in the House and any other discussion, hypothetical or not, will wait for that point in time.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in all due respect, it has been made public that Bill 72 will be repealed by this government. In respect to this committee and to Manitobans, I would like to have the Minister inform us as to the kind of collaboration that is occurring and that will occur in terms of Bill 72. What kind of collaboration is being done with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba taxpayers, the parents, the advisory councils for school leadership and the shareholders?

Ms. Barrett: As the Member well knows, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), the Minister of Labour, and most particularly their senior staff that have been seconded to this issue

have been meeting regularly with both the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. The Minister of Education meets regularly, as a matter of fact. He is far more often found in schools and at parent advisory council meetings than I would suggest many ministers of Education in the past. But then that is an historical context, and we do not want to go historical here.

My understanding is that the interests and the concerns of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents have been dealt with or are being dealt with through the process of consultation with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees.

Mrs. Smith: It has come to this committee's attention that the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the taxpayers, the teachers, the front-line teachers, know very little about what this government intends to do and feels very strongly that there is a great lack of collaboration with them. Could this minister please tell this committee, Madam Chair, what further collaboration will be done in spite of the fact that I have heard the Minister is in the schools, the Minister has been collaborating—

Point of Order

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): Madam Chair, it appears that the Member opposite is confusing our time here when it should be spent with probably a different group obviously with involving a lot of questions regarding school and consultations between the Minister and the different ministers. Obviously those consultations have been very extensive.

The Member opposite, I would just like to mention in my statement here that the collaborations have been ongoing and continue to be ongoing. The Minister, I do not know how many times she can express her answer to the Member opposite, but the process is ongoing. The Member seems to be badgering the Minister on this point. I would just like to point out on a point of order that the Minister has answered this a number of times, and I am not sure what the Member opposite would like to get out of these proceedings. But to badger the Minister does not

seem to be the proper place to do it. She should probably be directing her questions in Education.

* (16:30)

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

Mr. Schuler: One of the things I am sure all of us on this committee certainly do appreciate is the energy of new MLAs, and I am certainly one of those new MLAs. I would confer with the member opposite, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), in that besides signing letters maybe he should be reading some of the documents and educating himself on the process, because with youthful enthusiasm should also come some study.

I would point out to him on page 28 where it talks about Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services. Objectives, it says "Assist Public School Teachers and School Boards in collective bargaining, as provided under The Public Schools Act." I think the Member has allowed his enthusiasm to get carried away, because clearly he has no point of order, and clearly he has not done his homework, and clearly he has not been following what has been taking place at this committee. Maybe he should focus a little bit more on the activities here and concentrate more on what is taking place here and a little less on the partisan kind of political mailings that he is signing off right now.

I would suggest to you, Madam Chair, that he has no point of order. This is a waste of the committee's time, and I think clearly that is what it should be identified as.

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

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): On the same point of order, Madam Chairperson. As you recall, just a very short time ago, you brought in a ruling in regard to the banter that was between two individuals at the table in regard to the conversations that were conducted. A point of order is a very serious matter, as you have pointed out in your decision just a few moments ago, and a point of order is usually related to the

procedures or the intent. It is not in regard to the content.

The questioning of the critic to the Minister throughout the normal course of Estimates is to be questioning in all broad areas. Now, whether the other members of the Opposition disagree with that, that is within their prerogative. But a point of order is on procedure, not content.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Brandon West, on the same point of order with new information.

Mr. Smith: I believe, Madam Chair, that the direction the Member just previously mentioned involving clarity of questions being asked to the Minister, obviously, the questions being asked to the Minister—and he had mentioned the critic. The person who was previously speaking on the point of order, in fact, is not the critic in this particular department. However, she is a critic in Education, which is exactly my point.

The point I am making on the point of order is that, and the Member had previously mentioned, this is a serious matter. These are serious proceedings, and certainly we would like to have questions asked and brought forward. However, the members opposite seem to be asking the same question over and over again, and if they would like to put a tape recorder on to ask the same question over and over again or change their tone, I believe that is my point of order. It is the same question that was asked three times previously, and I am just saying that maybe she would like to either change one or two of the words in her delivery, but it is the same question over and over. I believe that that is a waste of the time.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Springfield, on the same point of order with new information?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Madam Chair. The Member for Brandon West, again, has allowed his enthusiasm to cloud his reason. Perhaps the Member should one more time check his facts, which I think he is having grave difficulty with, as he seems to only be signing his political letters over there. The Member from Fort Garry is the Deputy Critic of Labour and has good

cause and good reason to be here. In fact, Madam Chair, all members of this House have a right to be at this committee and all members have a right to ask questions.

I would suggest to the Member for Brandon there are 240 hours to be used for Estimates and if this Legislative Assembly chooses to spend a portion of it here, then so be it. Again, I would suggest to the Member that he just continue on signing his political letters and let the rest of us continue with what is going on here.

Madam Chairperson: I thank all the Members for their contributions. However, I would point out that once again this is not a point of order. I think it is worthy of repeating, the point of order should be used to draw the Chair's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, dispute the accuracy of facts, clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood, raise a further point of order.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: A new question from the Member for Fort Garry?

Mrs. Smith: Would the Minister clarify some points that the Government has brought forward? Minister Caldwell made it clear in correspondence dated April 25, 2000, with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the MTS that he intends to have new collective bargaining in place by June 30. Would the Minister clarify: Is this the Minister's intention as well?

Ms. Barrett: The legislation that is being discussed here today, the Bill 72 legislation, for lack of a better phrase, will be brought in by the Minister of Education. The role of the Department of Labour in this process has been as chairing at the assistant deputy minister level sharing expertise and experience in negotiating and collective bargaining and labour legislation language and that kind of thing. The legislation will be tabled by the Minister of Education. The final timing of that will be a decision of government as a whole.

Mrs. Smith: Can this Minister outline the kind of specific collaboration that will take place prior to this legislation being in. This is a government decision. It is public knowledge that Bill 72 will be repealed. There have been numerous alarms set out across the province with a lot of documentation, a lot of letters coming into my office, as I am sure it has the Minister's office. There are some questions that are on the table. The first one is: Why not more collaboration with the shareholders?

So, once again, Madam Chair, I would like the Minister of Labour not to distance herself from this, but to come clean, come forward, and let Manitobans know what kind of collaboration will take place, seeing as the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba taxpayers, the front-line teachers in the schools are very unclear about the Government's intent in repealing Bill 72.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to repeat my earlier answer to this question that the Minister of Education, and actually at some public meetings that I have attended, as well, where teachers and parents have been present. I do not know that there are any shareholders, per se, in the public education system—an interesting use of that word—but the Minister of Education has been very open, has been available to talk with any group. The consultative process has been undertaken with many meetings between the Minister and Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Minister and Manitoba Association of School Trustees, between the Minister and staff of both Department of Education and Labour, with both of those groups. And, as I have stated, public meetings, letters, individual contacts by not only the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, but certainly the government MLAs have had an opportunity to have input and to share some of their constituents' issues or concerns in the process. The legislation will be tabled in due course.

* (16:40)

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): My question, I was just wondering whether there are any other labour groups in the province that actually have,

in the legislation, the right of the employer to control wage settlements through ability to pay?

Ms. Barrett: To my knowledge, no.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, the Minister talks about collaboration and talks about shareholders as being an interesting concept. I have heard from a lot of the shareholders that I would like to outline: parent councils, taxpayers, because it is well known if Bill 72 is repealed, depending on what this government is going to do with Bill 72, it could be a disaster to the province.

I quote from an article from school trustees that said: "And the long term implications of a change in teacher bargaining can have a detrimental effect on education in this province, especially when it is combined with a lack of provincial financial commitment for education." Having talked about collaboration, having talked about the ability to pay, having talked about taking teacher bargaining from The Schools Act onto The Labour Relations Act is a very, very serious and comprehensive manner. It is the responsibility of this Minister to be on top of what is happening here in the province to the taxpayers, to the teachers, to the students, to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. This is an accountability factor.

Having said that, this government has also said that they made a commitment to lowering taxes. We have not seen any of these promises. I am asking this Minister, before this Bill 72 is repealed: Will this Minister have a commitment to doing extensive collaboration—and I will be very specific about the shareholders, as this minister seems to be unclear as to who the shareholders are: No. 1, the taxpayers in Manitoba; No. 2, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, who have said repeatedly that they are shut out; the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents; the parent councils across this province; also the front-line teachers, who are very unclear as to the ramifications of Bill 72 after it comes in. Will this Minister make a commitment to slowing this Bill 72 down and not repeal this bill until more meaningful collaboration has been taken with the shareholders?

Ms. Barrett: The answer that I have given in the past is the answer that I continue to give, that there has been a great deal of consultation. There has been a great deal of input. The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has met with parent councils. I am sure most every MLA has met with their own parent councils, parent advisory groups, the associations that represent the superintendents, their concerns raised through the MAST, MTS. There has been a lot of publicity in the media. This issue has been raised many times in the House. There has been ample opportunity for all the people of the province to raise their concerns, to share their ideas.

Of course, there is always a degree of uncertainty before legislation is brought forward, especially when you know that there are going to be changes made. You know that there are going to be changes made in Bill 72, well, changes made, it will be repealed. The question and the concern and the uncertainty is around what will take its place. Legitimately various groups and individuals are a bit nervous, if you will, or uncertain, because they do not know what will be in the final legislation. That is a perfectly legitimate concern which will be taken care of very shortly.

There has been a great deal of consultation, a great deal of dialogue, a huge amount of dialogue that is taking place. No, we do not have any anticipation in changing or in our timing for bringing in the legislation that will effect the repeal of Bill 72 and put in place a new piece of legislation. That will happen this session. That is a commitment we have made, and that is the commitment we are going to live with. We have had months and months and months of discussion and dialogue with all of the directly affected parties in this very important and complicated situation.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in all due respect, the Minister's insistence that this government has initiated lots of collaboration and that they have gone to all the shareholders is not something that I am hearing from the public. I am hearing from specifically the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, I am hearing from the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, I am hearing from the taxpayers, and I am hearing from front-line teachers in schools that they have

not had enough collaboration. In all due respect to the Minister, it has been brought up on numerous occasions in the House. In all due respect to the Minister, there has been much media about it. In all due respect to the Minister, she is correct in saying that this is something that is a high priority for Manitobans in terms of the promise that the NDP Government has brought forward to repeal Bill 72.

The question I am bringing forth, Madam Chair, is that it is stemming from the fact that the people out there—even though the present Minister of Labour and her colleagues who object very strenuously across the table as I am asking this question, I am asking that more collaboration be done because the shareholders—and I will reiterate for the Minister, the shareholders are the taxpayers, the parent council members, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, front-line teachers—are saying: We are fearing this bill; we do not know what is going to happen with this bill.

* (16:50)

What I am asking the Minister, even though in her opinion a great deal of collaboration has taken place, that is not what Manitobans think, so I am asking this minister, since it goes under The Labour Relations Act, will she make a commitment to extending the time, instead of just deciding this is what we are going to be doing this session, will she extend the time and go out to Manitobans who are concerned, very concerned about his bill, especially the taxpayers? Will this minister and the NDP Government and the Minister of Education go forward in focus groups to Manitobans and find out what they are saying about it? Ask them what they really feel.

Ms. Barrett: I guess we will agree to disagree, or I am prepared to agree to disagree with the Member on the degree of consultation and dialogue and openness that has been shown over the many months since this issue has first arisen, and I find that interesting that of all the "shareholders" that the Member refers to, she does not talk about the Manitoba Teachers' Society, which has been an integral part of these discussions and dialogues and is the parallel

group to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees.

There is absolutely no plan to delay the introduction of the new bill, and I think the Member is making an assumption that this new piece of legislation will put the collective bargaining process under The Labour Relations Act. She has no way of knowing that there are two sides to that issue, that MTS would like the changes to fall into The Labour Relations Act and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees would like them to remain under The Public Schools Act, so it has not been made public. Add what the Government thinks will be made public when the legislation is tabled, and that is exactly how the process works and it is how the process has worked for a very long time, but to assume that it is going to go under The Labour Relations Act is an assumption, and we all know what that can lead to.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I would like to let the Minister know I taught for 22 years. When I am talking about front-line teachers, that is the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I was a part of the Manitoba Teachers' Society for 22 years. Having said that, I am telling the Minister that their front-line teachers, who are the Manitoba Teachers' Society, are telling me that they are not clear on Bill 72. They do not believe that collaboration has taken place.

Mr. Jim Rondeau. Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Acting Chair, this is not something that I am just bringing up here today because I feel this way, although I will have it on record that I do feel that there has not been enough collaboration. I am hearing from all these shareholders who are distressed, who are afraid, who are tentative, who are demanding more collaboration with the taxpayers here in Manitoba, more collaboration with the teachers, more collaboration with the Manitoba school superintendents, the trustees. They want more collaboration before this bill is repealed.

I want to remind the Minister that to just arbitrarily say the Bill will be repealed this session or to arbitrarily say, as the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) did, that he intends to

have a new collective bargaining in place by June 30, is something that strikes fear into the hearts of Manitobans. It is the responsibility of elected ministers and elected MLAs to come clean with the public and not play cat and mouse.

This government knows full well whether it is going under The Labour Relations Act, seeing as Minister Caldwell says it is going to be done by June 30, and I believe today is June 13. They must have "duh" some idea. I think that this minister has to come clean and has to make a commitment to Manitobans that this bill will not be repealed until more collaboration takes place.

Ms. Barrett: The legislation will be tabled in very short order, and at that point it will be very clear what the elements of the new legislation are. The Member is just unfortunately going to have to wait till the legislation is tabled. It would be inappropriate of me to make any comments prior to the tabling of that legislation.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Acting Chair, in all due respect, could the Minister please let this committee know—she said that Bill 72 will be repealed or the legislation, rather, will be brought forward in short order—please inform this committee if "short order" means by June 30, 2000?

Ms. Barrett: The Government will be bringing this legislation forward as soon as it is ready to be brought forward.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Acting Chair, Manitobans are wanting to have clear concise answers. I daresay that this legislation should not be ready to come forward until this minister and the Minister of Education have embarked on province-wide collaborative meetings with the parent councils, with the front-line teachers, with the taxpayers, with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. I want that on record.

This minister, Mr. Acting Chair, has been very evasive. She has stated that a lot of collaboration has taken place. I appeal to this minister once again to make a commitment to Manitobans to ensure that this Bill 72 will not be repealed until additional meetings have been

held across the province to find out what the taxpayers, what the front-line teachers, what the shareholders, as I have outlined earlier, believe should happen, want to happen and have their questions answered.

Ms. Barrett: I do not know if I heard a question there, but the answer is the same.

Mrs. Smith: We can go over this once again if the Minister did not hear the question. Let me ask once again: Will this Minister of Labour, who is elected by the people for the people, make a commitment to not letting Bill 72 be repealed without additional meetings with the taxpayers, with the front-line teachers, with the parent councils, with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: I have answered that question several times in the past, and I will let my former answer stand.

Mrs. Smith: With all due respect, Madam Chair, I was not clear on her answer. Her answer to what I thought she said was there has been a great deal of consultation and collaboration. So this minister does not intend to do any further consultation or collaboration with the aforementioned shareholders? Is this correct?

Ms. Barrett: Until the legislation is tabled, there will continue to be discussions and dialogue with anyone who wants to speak with the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) or any MLA whether from the specific groups that have been meeting with both the Ministers of Education and Labour and with their staff or any other individual in the province of Manitoba. So of course dialogue will be ongoing until the legislation is tabled.

Once the legislation is tabled we will have a debate in the House where issues can be raised, we will have public hearings where I am sure issues will be raised. We will have an opportunity through that process, as we do. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada that requires public hearings on every piece of legislation, I

believe, but then that is in the historical context, so forgive me for raising something like that.

* (17:00)

We will listen to all the presentations and take appropriate action if that is necessary. There have been occasions when bills have been amended at committee or even the odd time, again from an historical perspective for which I ask and beg forgiveness, at third reading in the Legislative Chamber.

So we are continuing to discuss and dialogue and talk with and hear from Manitobans both from groups and individuals and will continue to do so throughout the entire process. We also stand by our commitment to the repeal of Bill 72 and the timing commitment of this session. My understanding is that many if not all of the collective agreements expire at the end of June. So it is incumbent upon us to ensure fairness in the collective bargaining process, that the playing field is well known. I imagine that is the genesis of the Minister of Labour's statement about June 30. So those are my answers.

Mrs. Smith: I heard the Minister just say that this government was very willing to go out and have hearings, this government was willing to listen to anyone across Manitoba. Then I heard her say that, however, Bill 72 will be repealed.

Madam Chair, I say this is an unfair statement to Manitobans to make up a decision like this that is so crucial to the taxpayers here in Manitoba, to say Bill 72 will be repealed, and then in the same breath say, however, our government has collaborated with everyone. Then I am receiving letters. I am receiving phone calls. People across Manitoba are alarmed about Bill 72 and the ramifications of Bill 72. The people of Manitoba have questions about Bill 72. They have questions like: Are my taxes going up? Teachers have questions like: I might get higher wages, but what does that mean for my tax base? All sorts of questionings are coming out. In all due respect to the Minister, can she please explain how she feels that this collaboration has taken place with people objecting to Bill 72, and yet to say that Bill 72 will be repealed, how does that go together?

Ms. Barrett: For the Member's information, the repeal of Bill 72 was an election promise made by the NDP during the election campaign to the people of Manitoba, all of the people of Manitoba. I never said in my response to the Member we would go out across the province to hold hearings on this piece of legislation. I said in the legislative process, after second reading, we have public hearings, and we are the only province, my understanding is, that has that.

I believe that, as I have recognized in an earlier answer, yes, people are concerned, because they do not know what is going to be in the new piece of legislation. There are issues that have been raised, very legitimate, very complicated issues that have been raised by a number of groups and individuals that we have listened to, that we have asked for, that we have sought out. And there continues to be the opportunity to speak to any MLA, to speak to any of the associations that have been—well with one glaring exception—referenced by the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) in her discussion of those groups and individuals that are important to this discussion.

I think part of the challenge is to ensure that we clarify as quickly as is prudent our legislation, so that people will know the bill that we are discussing and that we will be discussing. We have been talking with various groups and individuals for months on this legislation and the elements that should go into it. We are in the final stages of drafting this legislation. I do not believe that it is completely drafted yet. It will be introduced in the House this session. That will, I assume, alleviate much of the concern on the part of Manitobans. At the very least, they will know what the legislation is. That is what we believe. It is important that this session we follow through on our election commitment, and we believe very strongly that we have done a great deal of consultation, both formal and informal, with a great variety of groups and individuals on this legislation.

As I said, we can agree to disagree on the process, on the quality of the consultation, on who has been consulted, who has been listened to and the timing of the legislation. But it is going to happen; it is going to happen this session. There will be ample opportunity after

the Bill has been tabled for dialogue both within the Legislature itself through speeches and discussion and through the public hearing process that takes place after the second reading of the legislation. So, we will agree to disagree, I am sure, on all of those issues, but my answer remains the same.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, it is quite clear to this committee that this decision was made politically. Having said that, Manitobans are saying quite clearly to this government that this bill is something they do not want repealed until they know more about the Government's intent. Intent, like questions they have, such as: Is it this government's intent to equalize the commercial levy across the province? That is a question that keeps coming up. In the collaborative process, perhaps this minister could answer that question for Manitobans in the event that Bill 72 is repealed, as this minister has stated, Madam Chair. Is it the intent of this government to equalize the commercial levy across the province?

Ms. Barrett: The legislation will be tabled very shortly, and those questions will be answered when the legislation is tabled. It would be going against government policy, both former governments, current governments, future governments, I might suggest, to reveal elements of legislation before it is finalized and before it is tabled in the House.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in all due respect, we do not react to legislation. This government has stated they have an open-door policy. The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has said he has an open-door policy. This Minister of Labour says she has an open-door policy as being part of the Government. However, this is not true.

Manitobans are outraged at the lack of consultation, at the shoving through of Bill 72 without careful consideration to the taxes going up, to the careful consideration to the ramifications on Manitobans. Manitobans are demanding that more collaboration be done, that this payoff to certain political people not go forward, that front-line teachers are asking questions. They want to know more about the ramifications of Bill 72 to them and their homes.

They are trying to get money to pay for music lessons, for soccer games, for hockey, and they are looking at their taxes and they are saying: What will happen if the clause is taken away about the right for school divisions to pay if this government equalizes the commercial levy across the province? What is going to happen? Are school divisions going to have to amalgamate because of this very careless promise by the irresponsible government to Bill 72 without open consultation? There have been no questions that are being answered. This minister and the Minister of Education, in all due respect, are not answering questions.

So I will again appeal to this Minister of Labour to give us some insight, give some answers to Manitobans. In a democratic society where we as MLAs are elected by the people for the people, we have a commitment to give answers to the people when they ask. The people are asking: What are the ramifications of Bill 72 to Manitobans across this province? Does this minister, does this government plan to equalize the commercial levy across this province, and do they realize the ramifications of this happening?

* (17:10)

Ms. Barrett: I am going to respond the same way as I have before and say that those questions and other specific questions as to the nature of the legislation that will follow upon the repeal of Bill 72 will become clear when the legislation is tabled in—

An Honourable Member: In the fullness of time.

Ms. Barrett: I am not going to say in the fullness of time. I am going to say in the very near future. I am not prepared, and I will say it right here and now, that I will not answer any questions about specifics of the legislation. That is not appropriate, and there will be plenty of time to debate and discuss the specifics of the legislation. The legislation, to my understanding, is not even completely drafted yet, so I am not able, and will not answer questions about the specifics of the legislation.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in all due respect, I am not asking questions of this minister

concerning specifics of the legislation. I am asking very specifically for more time for Bill 72, more time to reach out to Manitobans. We are all well aware, as MLAs in this Legislature, that people have a chance to come to committee here in Winnipeg. This is a big province. There are lots of small towns, there are lots of rural areas where people cannot come to Winnipeg so readily. There are time constraints. Teachers are telling me that they need to be in classrooms, that they do not have time to come to committee, that they have commitments right in their classrooms. What I am asking of this minister is to make a commitment to Manitobans that Bill 72 will not be repealed until further collaboration is done with Manitobans, specifically with the taxpayers, with the front-line teachers, with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and the front-line teachers, I might remind the Minister, is MTS. That is what MTS is all about.

Ms. Barrett: If MTS is all about front-line teachers, which it is, then I would assume that the Manitoba Association of School Trustees is all about school trustees, so I am questioning why the Member does not say, front-line school trustees, and heaven knows, school trustees must feel like they are on the front line sometimes. They have very difficult jobs to do and, by and large, with a few exceptions, they do them very effectively.

I have answered the question. The discussions went on, started, I believe, in early February between MAST and MTS and the Department of Labour and the Department of Education. That is three or four months. Actually, even before the election was over, we were hearing from individuals, we were hearing from organizations. We have continued to hear from them on a regular basis. The Minister has gone out and met with many parent-advisory groups. He has met with many schools where he has had a chance to talk to individual front-line teachers. As I have stated on numerous occasions, we will agree to disagree about the degree and quality of the consultation that has taken place.

We have committed to introducing the legislation before the end of this session and we

will do so, and we expect that the public hearings that will take place in this Chamber, maybe in this very room, will most likely take place in the evening, which is when most pieces of legislation, certainly legislation of this import, have their public hearings in the evening, so people who work during the day, as schoolteachers do, and as trustees do, in their jobs that they hold down when they are not trustees, will have an opportunity to come out and make their views known. We will carry on the public hearings as long as there are people ready to participate and willing to ask questions and make suggestions. We take in written submissions so people from outside our travel area can come in when we hold the public hearings. At the first of every session we ask for people who are from outside the city if they are present in the room, they have the first opportunity to make their presentation so that we do not hold them if they are within travelling distance. So we do all that we can do in the legislative process to allow as many people as want to, to make presentations. We have taken extraordinary steps, I believe, in discussing the very serious and very complicated issues that surround this whole debate. I will reiterate again: We are committed to the repeal of Bill 72. We are committed to bringing in a piece of legislation before the end of this session, a piece of legislation that puts the needs of the education system first, the needs of children first, that recognizes the needs of teachers, of school trustees, of the taxpayers, of parents.

We believe that this piece of legislation will provide a balanced response to all of the issues that have been raised by the Member and by very many other people in this province. We also believe that we have consulted widely and in a variety of manner, far more broadly we have consulted in this discussion than the former ministers of Education did when they brought Bill 72 in.

I am suggesting that the Member should just take a step back maybe and take a little historical trip down memory lane to what happened when Bill 72 was implemented, and a very unfortunate piece of legislation that was a result of not consulting, of not being clear on what you wanted, or maybe they were, maybe the government of the day was, clear on what it

wanted. What it wanted was a very flawed, unbalanced piece of legislation which we have committed to repealing, which we committed to repealing during the election campaign, so anyone who paid attention at all during the election campaign could not say that the Leader of the New Democrat Party and anyone who was asked about it in canvassing at the doorstep was told that this is what will happen. We are following through on the election commitment.

We have had months and months of discussion with various stakeholder groups; we have had open dialogue with as many of the citizens of Manitoba as we could possibly talk to. It is time to act; it is time to fulfil that election commitment; it is time that the people of Manitoba, and particularly those people who are closely involved in the public education system, know what our views are through the legislation on this very important issue. We will continue to discuss and dialogue and be open with anyone who wants to share their concerns with us in the debate in the Legislature, in the public hearings, in potential amendments that might come forward, so we are following through on our commitments. We are doing what we believe in a reasonable and principled and very balanced way.

* (17:20)

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I am sitting here at this committee today, and I am listening to the Member from Brandon West (Mr. Smith) and the Member from Transcona (Mr. Reid) make fun of teachers. I taught for 22 years, and I do take exception to that. However, my greater concern is not the political decision that was made here by the NDP Government. My greater concern is the people of Manitoba. I have received so many letters; I have received so many phone calls; I have received so many pleas from people all across Manitoba. If there was so much collaboration, how come I am hearing from parent council members; how come I am hearing from front-line teachers; how come I am hearing from the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees; how come I am hearing from these people, saying that they fear this legislation and they want more time, more collaboration?

This government made a commitment to lowering taxes across the province. They made a commitment and now we hear the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) saying: "Hear, hear," and saying: "This is what we are doing." We need this to be on record, because in committee they can say this and they can yell loud and clear, but Manitobans are living in fear of the future, in fear of what is going on. Their taxes are a big concern to them. That is not only teachers, but postmen, workers; everybody wants the lower taxes.

They fear that Bill 72 is not fully understood, Madam Chair. To say that there is collaboration and an open door policy by a government that refuses to give more time, to allow more dialogue with Manitobans is a travesty to the democratic process here in Manitoba. This government is on record as saying: We will be open door policy; we will listen to Manitobans. I am saying here in this committee, loud and clear, that Manitobans are fearing Bill 72. They will live to regret Bill 72.

I suppose, if you look at it from a global point of view, if you go to one or two or three meetings, and if this government is stating that they have open door policies and collaboration through these few meetings—I would daresay, Madam Chair, that that information should have trickled down to all Manitobans. There should not have been this public outcry. There is a public outcry, Madam Chair, because people are afraid of what is going to happen.

I am sitting here at this committee. I am listening to the elected members across the table—the Member from Transcona, the Member from Brandon West, the Member across the table, from Assiniboine—people who are stating loud and clear—there was so much noise, I apologize if it was not the Member from Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). But certainly the Member from Transcona, the Member from Brandon West are sort of laughing at the fact that people are making these requests. I can give him specific requests from their very areas where they were elected. What the people are saying, Madam Chair, is that they want more time, they want more collaboration. If this government is indeed committed to open door

policy, will this minister continue to just say: End of story, we have made a decision; we are repealing Bill 72? Or will she be open-minded to opening the door, and allowing more time. I am just asking for more time so that Manitobans can go and be able to voice their concerns about Bill 72.

Madam Chairperson: I would just like to take a moment to remind all the honourable members to have the courtesy of listening to the speaker. The calling across the table—*[inaudible]*

Ms. Barrett: Yet, again, I will answer the question. The Government is committed to repealing Bill 72. The Government will be bringing this piece of legislation in, as they said, before the end of this current session. The Government has consulted. If the Member has as many very worried people as she claims, if she has letters, I would appreciate, and we would appreciate, having those letters tabled. The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) would appreciate those letters being shared with—*[interjection]*—and if individuals are afraid to have their names put forward, write them out.

A very interesting suggestion, I might add, from the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) who did not have the common courtesy or the cognitive ability to think about the fact that, when he spoke at a press conference, he waved around a document that had an individual's social insurance number on it. Yet, again, I might raise the issue with the Member. He still has not responded to Mr. Lloyd Schreyer, an oversight that is not only impolite but maybe an oversight that he should very seriously consider.

Madam Chairperson: I would like to take a moment to remind all members to please provide the courtesy and the attention to the Member who has the floor. It is acceptable to carry on conversations at the committee table as long as they do not obstruct proceedings.

Point of Order

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, on a point of order, I have not been long to the deliberations here this afternoon. However, I did distinctly hear the questions that were posed here, and I am really

truly at a loss trying to comprehend what the Minister's response was in relationship to the question that was posed. I do not want to be seen as throwing a monkey wrench into what is going on here; however, relevancy, I believe, is very important to the progress of our challenge at hand here and that is to evaluate and examine the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the Member for his contribution, but he does not have a point of order and as he has just recently arrived, I am going to repeat one more time what these people have heard. A point of order should be used to draw the Chair's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, dispute the accuracy of facts, clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood or raise further controversy.

* * *

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, thank you. Could this Minister answer the question: Is the NDP Government committed to lowering taxes in this province?

Ms. Barrett: Yes.

Mrs. Smith: In the event that this is a commitment, another election promise, can this minister guarantee that property taxes for residents in Manitoba will not go up in view of the fact that Bill 72 will be repealed?

Ms. Barrett: It is my understanding that property taxes have a number of components to them, and the whole purpose, as I stated earlier, in the legislation that is being prepared for tabling very shortly in the House dealing with the repeal of Bill 72 and the new legislative elements that will take its place will be designed to provide balance and will be designed to respond to all of the issues that have been raised by all of the participants in this debate, in this discussion which has taken place over many months, and so there is no way that any government can guarantee that taxes will not go up or will not go down, particularly when the government does not have control over the jurisdictions that help levy the property tax. So

that is a question that is impossible to answer because it requires so many elements, the whole issue of property taxes is so complicated and is impacted by so many effects. As I have stated before, the legislation will be balanced and will be helping fulfil all of our election commitments either directly or indirectly that have either a direct or indirect relation to the education of our children.

* (17:30)

Mr. Faurchou: In regard to the repeal of Bill 72 and the involvement of the remuneration to the teaching staff, I would like to ask the Minister, because of her commentary already, is she familiar with the funding formula that is currently in place between the Province and the school divisions?

Ms. Barrett: I have taken a number of questions in this area, because the Department of Labour did have a facilitative role in many of the negotiations that were undertaken in the development of the legislation, but the specific question the Member is asking is a question that should be more directed to the Department of Education. The Department of Education's Estimates, for the Member's information, will be following directly upon the conclusion of the Labour Estimates.

To answer that specific question, I know that the formula is very complex. I do not pretend to have a very deep understanding of that. It is not in my department. It is not something I am aware of as a minister. I do know that it is a very complicated formula. My understanding, again, please do not hold me to this if my information or my memory does not serve me correctly, is that this is a formula. The formula that was followed this year is exactly the formula that has been followed in the last year or several years that was put forward by the former government. That is my understanding, but it is not anywhere in my area of expertise, and I have no further comment on it.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would like to have the Minister comment: Does she agree that anything that has to do with labour will impact on the tax base or the taxpayers in some way? Because we all know that when any

labour negotiations are administered in this province that it does have direct impact on taxpayers. It can be in a negative way or a positive way. Can the Minister, Madam Chair, clarify this?

Ms. Barrett: Anything that has to do with Education, anything that has to do with Health, anything that has to do with Justice, anything that has to do with Consumer and Corporate Affairs, anything that has to do with Agriculture and Food, anything that has to do with Conservation, anything that has to do with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, anything that has to do with Culture, Heritage and Tourism, anything that has to do with Industry, Trade and Mines, anything that has to do with Inter-governmental Affairs, for sure anything that has to do with Highways and Government Services, all have an impact on the taxes of the Province of Manitoba.

I find that question a very strange question. I think I know where the Member is going, but any decision on government programs has an impact on finances, on taxes. The former government raised many user fees quite substantially. We called them taxes, and many people could say they were taxes. The former government reduced the funding for public education quite substantially over many of the years that they were in government. That has an impact on taxes.

Anything that government does has a potential impact on not only services but the payment for those services. So we all know that in a democracy such as ours people by and large, I think, agree that—they may disagree on the amounts or the kinds of services that are provided—government has a role, whether it is municipal, provincial or federal, in providing services and legislative groundwork for all of the people of the province or all of the people of the jurisdiction, and without those services and those programs, our society would not be able to function, whether it is health care, education, justice or labour concerns.

I would venture to say that in the Department of Labour if we did not have health and safety inspectors, if we did not have Employment Standards, if we did not have

Conciliation, which is the area that we are supposedly dealing with today—right now, yes—that the quality of life for Manitobans would be greatly curtailed, the services would be greatly curtailed and their taxes might very well be even higher. You just ask employers in the Workers Compensation system if they do not recognize, and more and more of them are, the connection between prevention of accidents and lower rates for their assessment. So, of course, there is a link.

There is always a link between government services and programs and the wherewithal to pay for those government services and programs. It is up to us as government, it is up to every government, to ensure that there is a balance between the revenue that is generated, that the revenue that is brought in by licences, by user fees, by taxes, by any of the revenue sources is balanced with the services that are provided to the people of the province. That is our commitment, that we look very closely at both the provision of services and the cost of providing those services and the source of the revenue to provide those services, whether we are talking about provincial programming, municipal programming or federal programming. All governments, if they are worth their salt, pay attention to all of those elements, and this government most certainly does and will in the legislation that will be tabled shortly.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, will this minister acknowledge that, if the ability of school divisions to pay is altered in Bill 72, chances are that taxes will go up?

Ms. Barrett: No, I will not acknowledge that.

Mrs. Smith: This is one of the reasons why we are hearing across Manitoba from a lot of these people earlier, Madam Chair, this minister downplayed the fact that people were concerned about the repealing of Bill 72. This minister is well aware that there is great concern about Bill 72 because a lot of the letters I have got have been copied to the NDP Government or even sent to the various ministers and copied to me. So this is something that this minister is well aware of. We have heard her say that she will not acknowledge that taxes will go up.

Does that mean, Madam Chair, that this minister, if Bill 72 is repealed, will guarantee Manitobans that taxes will not go up?

* (17:40)

Ms. Barrett: I think I have answered that question before. I cannot guarantee, no government could guarantee, and if any government did guarantee that taxes of one sort or another would stay the same, that they would neither go up nor go down, would be laughed at, because situations change. There are how many school divisions? There are 52 school divisions, 54 or something like that, in the province today. Each of them has their own set of challenges and opportunities. Each of them has their own tax base. Each of them has their own financial situation.

As I have said to the Member, these questions dealing with this legislation or dealing with this issue are more appropriately directed to the Education Estimates. I am sure the member will have, well, less and less time, as it turns out, to discuss this with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) specifically.

But on the issue of taxes, on any of the issues that the Member has raised, the legislation will be tabled very shortly. We have taken into concern all of the concerns that have been raised, both pro and con. We have not downplayed the concerns that people have over the issue of what will happen to negotiated settlements with the repeal of Bill 72. We have taken that into account. I believe when the Member sees the legislation tabled very shortly she will recognize the fact that we have listened to all of the concerns that have been raised, both about Bill 72 itself and the repeal of Bill 72.

We have been very balanced. I am sure that when she sees the legislation very shortly, she will agree that it is a very balanced piece of legislation.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, having listened to the non-answers that have been received at this committee, I feel it regrettable that this minister is so concerned about the time on this very serious issue. I have asked—

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

Point of Order

Mr. Smith: Madam Chair, the unparliamentary language that is being used, non-answers and such. It was pretty evident the answers that the Minister had given were direct answers to a question that has been asked, the same question in 15 different ways. It is very unfair, in my opinion, that the Minister is being asked hypothetical questions from a hypothetical critic that basically is trying to get the Minister to envision something that obviously is not basically for this department. The Member opposite seems to be just looking for a soapbox to stand on and pound on in education.

It is unfortunate, but I would like to mention into the record that the hypothetical questions she is asking are very unfair. Not only that is the unparliamentary language that is being used by the Member opposite I would call into question.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Springfield. Is this on the same point of order?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Madam Chair. Again the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) has allowed his enthusiasm to cloud his ability to reason. I just love how his enthusiasm carries him to the point where now he feels he is a great parliamentarian and he can decide what is parliamentary language and is not.

In fact, nothing that was said by the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) was unparliamentary. In fact, I would argue that the Member should be commended for the kinds of things that she has put on the record that this minister has refused for weeks now to answer questions. She has dodged. She has hidden behind all kinds of departmental directives that she instituted before this whole process began.

I think the Member for Fort Garry has been very clear, has been very concise, and has pointed out what this minister has not been doing, that is, she has not been answering the questions. The Minister should be told to answer the questions and answer them forthwith.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for St. Norbert, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): On the same point of order, Madam Chairperson. I was listening quite intensely to the conversations that were going on within the committee room, and I must say that the honourable member clearly does not have a point of order. It is merely a dispute over the facts. He never has a point.

Madam Chairperson: The Minister of Family Services, on the same point of order?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I believe that it is inappropriate in our rules to ask a minister about legislation which has not been tabled. These are clearly hypothetical questions, and the Member has gone on now for some, I would think about an hour essentially going around the same issue of asking a hypothetical question about prospective legislation which the Minister under our rules cannot answer because the legislation has not been laid before the House. So it would be unparliamentary for her to respond, and it is equally unparliamentary for the question to be asked in the first place.

The Minister has been very gracious in saying when the legislation is tabled she will of course respond and there will be opportunities, but I think if you consult the authorities you will find that hypothetical questions about prospective legislation do not belong in Estimates unless there is a reference in Estimates to a piece of legislation and some detail is provided in regard to it.

So I would ask you to call the Member to order and ask her to move along and debate the Estimates, which is what we are here for. When the legislation is introduced in the House, that is the time to debate the legislation, but I believe this is not a trivial point. A minister or a minister of the Crown cannot provide information about legislation which has not been laid before the House. Therefore, I think that you should rule any further question concerning legislation out of order following the authorities, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Springfield, is this new information on the same point of order?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, it is, Madam Chair. The Minister of Family Services and Housing, like the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), perhaps should be concentrating on what is taking place here at this committee, and then they would not be speaking and basically not having a point. If you look under sub-appropriation 11-2(c) Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services, Objectives, and I read into the record: "Assist Public School Teachers and School Boards in collective bargaining, as provided under The Public Schools Act."

So actually, Madam Chair, this is exactly where this debate should be taking place, and the Minister should be checking his facts and not allowing his enthusiasm to cloud his ability to reason like the Member for Brandon West. This is exactly where this should be taking place, and the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) should be commended for what she is doing here. She is doing absolutely what this is set out to do. Certainly this committee thinks she is doing a great job of it, and if members would please stop trying to stall her so that she could go on asking the questions which the Minister seems to refuse to want to answer.

Madam Chairperson: I thank all honourable members for their advice respecting the point of order raised. I will take the matter under advisement so that I may peruse Hansard and will report back to the committee.

* * *

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, it is regrettable that members opposite, the Member for Brandon West and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and our present Minister of Labour cannot be very clear in answering the questions. To clarify, I am not asking about legislation, I am asking about the ability to collaborate with all the shareholders. Can this Minister—*[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: I would like to take a moment to remind all honourable members to please provide the courtesy of your attention to the Member who has the floor.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. Having said this, I have continued this line of questioning because of the importance to

Manitobans. Because of the concern and the alarm that is out there all across Manitoba about the repealing of Bill 72, questions are being asked by front-line teachers; questions are being asked by parent councils; questions are being asked by taxpayers. They want more time. What I am trying to do is get more time so people can be heard.

The Committee is not enough. There is a time for people to come in at the committee level, but to just stand by an election promise, I want to bring to your attention that this government has made a commitment to lower taxes across Manitoba. This government has made a commitment for open-door policy. This government has made a commitment to listening to people. All I am asking for is for the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), for the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) not to dig in their heels, not to say we are repealing Bill 72 very shortly no matter what Manitobans say, no matter what their requests are. The reason I am pursuing this is because I have been asked to do this, because it is a great concern to Manitobans.

* (17:50)

I draw your attention to the article in the *Free Press*, a report from one of Minister Caldwell's own employees advising against the Government repealing Bill 72.

As I remind you, in 1996, the provincial government passed legislation that limited an arbitrator's ability to award clauses such as class size, the scheduling of recesses and lunch, the selection and assignment of teachers and principals, and the method of evaluating teachers. Manitoba trustees lobbied for these changes, concerned that these clauses would affect the division's ability to manage. As well, I want to bring to your attention the fact that there is a national trend to these types of clauses in teacher collective agreements.

Boards across the province are worried that the implications of restricting class size could result in more teachers, thus higher payroll costs; fewer teacher assistants; more mixed grades; fewer options for senior high students; the construction of additional classrooms and higher operating costs. These are real concerns in every

constituency across this province. This government has said that they are committed to lower taxes. They have said they are committed to open-door policies.

Madam Chair, this is not an open-door policy. I have spent this afternoon talking about the alarm that is out there, asking for extra time to consult with shareholders. I want to remind you it is not always easy for people from the rural areas to get in to Winnipeg. It is not always easy for them to pay for hotel costs. It is not always easy for these people from many kilometres away to be able to pay the gas mileage to come into committee to voice their concerns. It is not easy. This is a passionate cry across the province for Manitobans to have a fair play.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that Premier Doer, Minister Caldwell, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) have all stated that they want to level the playing field. Manitobans have questions. They have questions when a report from the minister's own lawyers are advising the Government against repealing Bill 72. They have questions when the Manitoba Association of School Trustees is saying that they have not got enough time for open collaboration. They have had not enough time to ask the questions. Teachers are calling from all across Manitoba asking what are the ramifications of Bill 72.

A lot of teachers, Madam Chair, do need higher wages. They do need supports in the classroom, but they are very, very intelligent, committed people, committed to the students across Manitoba. These teachers are asking the question: What is the impact on the students? What is the impact on our children, on our personal children? What is the impact on our quality of life? Parents across Manitoba are saying we cannot afford to pay music lessons because we were better off before the Budget came down. We are hearing all across the province that this concern for higher taxes is something that this government has to stop showing impatience for and start listening to the people.

MLAs across this province are committed to the people who elected them, are committed to the people who voted them in. I have to say that

the collective bargaining under the School Act has addressed many concerns that teachers had. It has addressed many questions that trustees had. In terms of the arbitration, very, very few agreements have been altered or held up.

It is regrettable, with all due respect, that members opposite have to sit across from this table and jeer and laugh when I am appealing to this government to live up to their election promises, to live up to having an open-door policy, to live up to making sure that taxes are lower for Manitobans all across Manitoba. That includes our teachers, our teachers who need support in our schools, our teachers who need a better quality of life in their homes. We know that the collective-bargaining changes have ramifications across this province that have not been answered to the Manitoba taxpayers.

Madam Chair, there have been so many questions, so many press releases, so many articles in the paper that this government has ignored, this minister and the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and the NDP Government have refused to answer. Members opposite consider it a joke, and I need it on record that Manitobans are alarmed at the repealing of Bill 72. It is difficult to understand why members opposite, no matter what, refuse, this Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) refuses to give Manitobans more time to be heard, more time to talk about their grievances, more time to answer questions across Manitoba. What we are hearing from these ministers and from this government, on one hand, they have an open-door policy; on one hand, they are going to lower taxes. But when Manitobans have questions about Bill 72, asking can you guarantee, can these ministers guarantee that our taxes will not go up, then the ministers reply, no, this cannot be a guarantee, although in the election promises that guarantee was there. That guarantee for open-door policy, that guarantee that they would listen to the people, that guarantee that they would change was there. This is not happening.

This needs to be on record that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) are being very, very vocal in their denial that Bill 72 needs to be repealed, like the NDP Government, like this Minister of

Labour is denying that there are questions out there. She is questioning Manitobans as to whether or not they need to have more time, when a report from Minister Caldwell's own lawyers advise the Government against repealing Bill 72—and this was public knowledge; it hit the papers—when there is apprehension from school divisions all across Manitoba, when there are public newspaper articles all across Manitoba calling out for this government to stop this process until more Manitobans can be heard.

This is a travesty. This is a sad day in the history of Manitobans. This is a sad day when this government cannot live up to its promises to the people of Manitoba, to its promises that they will have an open-door policy, to its promises now they cannot guarantee that the repeal of Bill 72 will not raise taxes. It is like the Education budget, there was no guarantee that taxes would not be raised. All across Manitoba taxes have gone up. Manitobans cannot live under this kind of weight on their shoulders.

Madam Chair, this is a real concern. It is regrettable that this minister is so mindful of the time and so condemning of me as a critic, and I am the Deputy Critic of Labour in terms of asking these questions.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., Committee rise.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Would the Minister's staff please enter the Chamber now.

We are on page 27 of the Estimates book, Resolution 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Chairman, I understand that you were well into discussions with the Minister on issues pertaining to ARDI

and a number of other development initiatives, and I am going to turn the proceedings over to my colleague to continue the debate where he left off last—

Mr. Chairperson: Is there a point of order here?

Point of Order

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Chairman, you have said that we are on line 3. We did on Friday go to another section, because we understood that the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) did not want line 3 passed until the critic got here.

So I would ask the Member, out of respect for staff who are here to deal with line 3 and to get some order to what we are doing, that we could do line 3 and then move through in an orderly fashion, rather than keeping all of staff here because there is a lot of work in the Department to do on behalf of the farmers of Manitoba. So I would ask that the Member agree to proceed with questioning on line 3, move through that one, and then move on.

I know earlier we said that we would do Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation and the Crop Insurance, both of those corporations, and that then we would move into line-by-line. I would request, Mr. Chairman, that we proceed in that fashion, rather than moving back and forth through the various lines, because it makes it very difficult for staff to move back and forth into the Chamber. I think that that would be the orderly fashion to do it in.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, the Minister, obviously, has a short memory. When we started the discussions of the Estimates process, we had indicated and we agreed, the Minister and I, that we would have a fairly free-roaming and open debating process. When it came to passage of certain lines, we would deal with them at the time that we came to them.

I indicated to the Minister that we would indicate to her well in advance what staff we would require in order to debate the various issues as we proceeded through the debate. She chose to go the other route. She chose to identify

to us which departments she would bring into the House, and they were Crop Insurance, and they were MACC, and then we moved into the next session as to her directions. It is her direction that has led us to this unorganized process of going through Estimates.

If we had retained the process that we had agreed to, we would have gone through this in a very orderly fashion. We would have given notice to her well in advance. I say to her that when we are ready to pass lines, we will indicate to the Minister when we are ready to pass them. Until that time, we will have a fairly free and open-ranging debate and discussion on the Department of Agriculture.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member is not quite accurate in his comments, I do not believe, because we said that we would do Crop Insurance and then we would do the Agricultural Credit Corporation based on the fact—
[interjection]

Yes, Mr. Chairman, I had asked that we do that, and then we would move through the Estimates in an orderly fashion. We have passed the Agricultural Credit Corporation and Crop Insurance. We are now into Marketing and Farm Business Management, and that is the staff who are with us here in the Chamber. Out of respect for the staff that is in the Chamber now, I would ask the Member to do his questions on this particular section on the line we are on. Then we will move forward and bring the other staff in. I would ask the Member to recognize that this is a very important department that has an impact on a lot of people in Manitoba and there is important work to be done. I would like the staff to have the flexibility to do that work rather than to wait to find out which line the Member might want to be on. I would ask for his co-operation to proceed on the line that we are on right now.

Mr. Chairperson: So far, we have passed line item 3.1.(a) to (e), 3.2.(a) to (b), 3.3.3. We are now as far as the Chair is concerned at 3.4. Unless the two persons involved have an agreement, it is the ways of the House, this Committee whom we serve, to proceed in an orderly manner. As far as the Chair is concerned, we are now on item 4.(a) and the following.

Mr. Jack Penner: I am not quite sure whether we should not stop right here for a little while and ask the Clerk to review Hansard as to the agreement that we had reached at the beginning of the debating procedures. Mr. Chairman, this is, after all, one of the most important parts of the legislative process: to review the Estimates of the Department. That is my job as critic for this department, and I take that job very seriously.

If Mr. Chairman is telling me that he will rule otherwise on what we had agreed to, then I would question the process. Let me remind you, I had asked the Minister at the start of the proceedings whether we could have a fairly free-roaming discussion and debate on the Department of Agriculture. Her response was in the positive in that regard. Then I told her that we would let her know well in advance what areas and what sections of the Department we would like to debate and discuss. Well in advance we would do that. She chose to bring in her section that she wanted to discuss and that she wanted to debate. That is her business.

The agreement still stands that we will have a fairly free and broad-ranging debate, and we will remain in section 4 until we are finished with that debate. We will not pass these lines until we are finished. The administrative section gives us the opportunity to debate in a broad range of issues, as broad as we want to. So, I mean, we can be here all day debating this, and we can be here all next week debating this. But we will move as we had intended to move initially regardless of where the Minister wants to go. This is our procedure and this is our chance—the only chance—that we have for the public to review the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture. I take that very seriously and I believe that that is one of the most important aspects of this Legislative Assembly. We in opposition tend to fully exercise our rights in this Committee—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: There is no question there that there is an agreement. The Chair will consider the agreement. But in case of altercation like this between the Opposition Critic and the Minister, the Chair perceives no agreement and the Chair will proceed in an orderly manner. If there is global discussion, it

will take place when we consider the Minister's salary.

An Honourable Member: We are on section 4, right?

Mr. Chairperson: We are on section 3.4.(a) and following.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Just at the end of the session that we had last week with the Minister, we were discussing some of the issues around the disaster funding in southwest Manitoba. Looking at a number of the alternatives that this government has looked at, the Minister indicated that they have gone to Ottawa for 90-10 funding and have done some work in regard to trying to get a 50-50 program together in using \$21 million. I believe that was their indication from the \$71 million that was put forward in safety nets last year by the previous government. They looked at using \$21 million as their share of the funding that could have been matched by the federal government. It is my understanding that they were looking at a \$43-million package. I wonder if the Minister could indicate to me just what kinds of negotiations they had, first of all, on the 90-10 funding, and where they were at with that.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am not trying to be difficult. I am trying to work through this. The Member has asked a question. We are on section 3.4. The question that he is asking would come under 3.8, Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance. That staff is not here in the Chamber with us now. So I would ask the Member if he would hold that question until we get to 3.8 and we have the staff that can address that one with us.

Mr. Maguire: I guess, Madam Minister, it was really a question of discussions that you have already had with your federal counterparts. I would not expect that there was very much new in that area. On the couple of questions that I had, I was just wondering, I was asking where you are at with negotiations now in the 90-10 package with the federal government, that we have not been able to get results from but that you had indicated there had been some discussions on. I was wondering if there was a way that could be done. If the Minister wishes

not to proceed in that area at this time, certainly you gave some indication of that on Friday.

Mr. Chairperson: We are now on item 3.4(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management.

* (14:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member is right. We did have a lot of discussion on Friday. We knew that the official critic was not here on Friday, and the Opposition was not wanting to pass any of the lines while the official critic was not here. We were accommodating on that issue. We covered quite extensively the discussions that the Member raised. We could continue that discussion when we get to section 3.8

Mr. Chairperson: We are now on item 3.4(a). Any questions?

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, Madam Minister. I only raise this in this particular section as well, because of the marketing and the management of the business decisions that the farmers are having to make out there on a daily basis, some of them are already out of business. Some of them have taken other jobs. Some of them have rented land out. Some of them have sold land to other family members and foreign investors, who have brought their families to Canada as an opportunity. It is the local farmers in that area that are not able to continue farming. We could discuss it under disaster, but it certainly is a business-management decision on each of these farms on a daily basis, and that is why I raise it here, Mr. Chair.

I feel that the few questions that I have in regard to this disaster program would easily be answered by the Minister, given the fact that she has been the one in the negotiations, she and the Minister for emergency services, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), in dealing with this whole issue with our federal counterparts. I put forward, I ask: Would she be prepared to answer direct questions in regard to some of the discussions that she has had with her federal counterparts on this issue?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Member for the question. I have to say that we had a very thorough discussion on this when

we were last here on Thursday. I outlined for the Member all the steps that were taken as far as the negotiations, the role the group of eight played, the principles that we went to Ottawa with, the problems we faced in those negotiations and the difficulties. I also outlined to the Member, and read into the record for him, the fact that these negotiations have been going on for some time, and it was my predecessor, his colleague, that started the process of moving in the direction that we are on. We talked about the disaster assistance in our last meeting, and I told him then, as I will tell him today, when we went to Ottawa, we outlined all the concerns and all the challenges why this should be addressed under disaster assistance, and Ottawa continued to say no, no, no.

Mr. Maguire: Well, my recollection, Mr. Chair, is that we had a good discussion about ARDI and some of the issues around it on Friday, or Thursday, pardon me, the last day of sitting of the House, and we were in the process of beginning to discuss the whole process of disaster assistance for southwest Manitoba.

I had raised one question at least on it, and we know the federal answers to date. I guess the questions that I will be asking are around the reasoning behind the federal decisions and if perhaps the federal government had given the Minister any concrete examples of why they would not come to the table with some of these funding alternatives.

Mr. Chairperson: May I make an observation here. Of course, everything is related to everything under the sun, but the item now is Marketing and Farm Business Management. If any other question is relevant to this issue of Marketing and Farm Business Management, we can take it up. Otherwise, it will have to come up in the appropriate headings when they come to the heading, unless you agree that you want to jump from place to place, which the Chair is reluctant to agree with because it will make it very complicated to have an orderly proceeding in this way.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, you have just described what we agreed to at the beginning of these Estimates, and I am very pleased that you are in agreement, that if there is agreement to

move from one area to another area, we have the authority to do that. I appreciate your consent to that. The Honourable Member is only exercising what we had agreed to at the outset of this Estimates procedure.

Quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, I can make the case, if you want me to, I can build the case around that we can make everything relevant to one line of this Estimates process. Because they are all interrelated, I can speak for hours on this debate if you want me to. I mean, I can speak for days on this issue if you want me to. I do not think it would be productive. I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister be asked to respond to the questions that are being put in this process of Estimates debate.

Mr. Chairperson: The Chair assumes the responsibility of conducting the proceedings in a very orderly manner. Although it may, on discretion, give some leeway to the Members to make agreement, it does not mean that they can jump all over the place. The Chair will rule them irrelevant if they do so.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to say that I agree with your ruling. I would like for us to proceed in an orderly fashion giving respect to the staff that is in the Chamber and move along, so that the staff can know when they have to come into the Chamber.

The Member says that they said that they would give notice ahead of time of which staff they wanted in the Chamber. Well, the Member has not given any indication of which line they want to deal with. We are on line 3.4. I am asking the Member if we would proceed on that line so that the staff people, who are very busy people, who do very important work, can then go back to their offices and do the business of farmers of Manitoba.

I am not asking that we miss any section. I am asking that we proceed in an orderly fashion. We did ask for Crop Insurance and the Agricultural Credit Corporation to be done first because those people are from out of town, and we certainly would not want them coming in every day from Portage and Brandon to wait to decide which section we are going to. We have dealt with those lines. We are now on the line

dealing with Agricultural Development and Marketing. In fairness to the staff that is here, I would ask the Members to ask questions on those lines. Then the people who work in particular sections can join us in the Chamber and provide pertinent information that I might need to help provide the information for the Members.

* (15:00)

I know the Member has a lot of respect for the people that work in the Department of Agriculture. I certainly appreciate the work that they do, but there are things that have to be done and it is not fair to the staff to have all of them waiting. So I am asking that we proceed in an orderly fashion and deal with the issues as they come in line in the Estimates book. That will be very helpful for us.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would ask the Minister then whether she would agree that this Estimates process is one of the most key and important functions of this Legislative Assembly in that we are elected to represent the people of Manitoba, and in the best interest of Manitobans we are here to determine whether the expenditures that are going to be made by these people running the Department of Agriculture are, in fact, relevant or, in fact, in a manner of importance, if the Minister can agree to that, and if she will agree as we said at the outset, we would have a free-ranging discussion and we would pass lines if and when we got to them or chose to pass them, she agreed that we would do that. I had indicated to her in respect to that, we would clearly indicate to her what our preference of order of the debate well in advance of the debate, whether she concurs with that, and whether we can, in fact, proceed in that manner. So far it has been her agenda that has driven the Estimates. She has indicated to us which departments or parts of the Department she wants to bring in, or which board she wants to bring in. It is clear to me that she is trying to establish an agenda for herself here.

This is the Opposition's agenda, this is the Opposition's opportunity to review the Estimates for the people of Manitoba, the Estimates that are before us, and to determine whether the

relevancy of the expenditures are in concurrence with what the people's needs are. That is our job, and we intend to deliver on our side of the issue and, Mr. Chairman, I sincerely hope the Minister will stop stonewalling her own Estimates, continue with bringing forward and allowing the debate to continue as it should, and to allow the questions to be put on the matters that are of importance to the Opposition.

Mr. Chairperson: Let us not waste our time making recriminations, or blame each other about little things. Let us proceed as best we can. We are on item 3. 4 Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member has questioned me whether I thought this was one of the most important processes that we could have, and indeed I agree with him. This is a very important process. This is an opportunity for members of opposition to ask detailed questions about the Department; and that is why I want to proceed in an orderly fashion so that we would have the right staff in the Chamber to ensure that we are indeed giving the right answers and the right information to the Member. I am very much prepared to proceed in an orderly fashion with the right staff in the Chamber. We have had no requests in advance from the Member as to which section he wants to go to, and for that reason, I would request that we stay on the line that we are on and move forward in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is very obvious that the Minister has chosen to stay on her own agenda and that she has not even given us an opportunity to try and indicate to her what order of discussion we would like the Department to proceed with. She has chosen to set the agenda. All I am saying to her, if that is the way she wants to proceed, then we will proceed this way, but we will discuss everything under the sun in relevance to item 3.4, and we will be wide-ranging and all over the place. I say to them, Mr. Chairman, that if you want to be relevant to 3.4, we can debate that forever and a day, and we can debate that until the Estimates end.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4.(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I agree with my critic for Agriculture here, that farm business, management and marketing are what agriculture is all about today. We are doing the business of farmers in Manitoba. That is what we are doing here, as the Minister said, and as the critic has said, that we are here to do the business of farmers in Manitoba.

I am representing farmers in an area that were completely distraught by disaster beyond anything to do with their own making last year, and the questions that I wanted to ask were merely questions in the direction of what we can do for the support of these people in southwest Manitoba. The Minister's own Premier (Mr. Doer) today is meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada to raise this issue. I just had discussions with him before he went myself to have discussions on the kinds of issues that we are talking about. Very clearly, as part of that all-party delegation to Ottawa last fall, we were unsuccessful in getting the \$300 million on the table that we were talking about, that we got \$100 million on the table this spring in a totally different program. We cannot be happy with that, and the Minister and the Government have recognized that.

However, none of these funds have been targeted to date, with all of the plans that have been talked about, for the farmers of southwest Manitoba. There has been absolutely not one penny targeted to that region. It is very relevant that I ask these questions on behalf of these people that are out there today in southwest Manitoba struggling to get a crop in the ground. I can indicate as well, in spite of the fact that it has been said that the dry southwest is back to being the dry southwest, that there is still land that has not been seeded this spring as a result of last year's moisture in 1999. I have been able to establish that on many farm operations over the weekend tour that I have had in my own constituency just this past weekend. As I drove to Winnipeg last night, parts of that region got an inch and a half of rain. I have been discussing that issue with them this morning.

I, too, felt I was responsible, in being here today, to continue the discussion we had last Thursday. Mr. Chairman, that discussion that we ended that session with, was dealing with the disaster payments and the disaster funding and the "what can we do" for the people of southwest Manitoba and all of Manitoba for the disaster that they befall because of no ability of themselves to control the weather. I, too, left the opportunity of being at a 4-H rally in my constituency today, forewent the opportunity to speak at that presentation today at noon, that 4-H rally in the community of Melita, with the complete understanding that I would be here today to be able to continue the discussion on this issue.

That is why I feel that it is very relevant that the Minister obviously knew on Thursday where we were in the discussions in the whole area of agriculture in the province of Manitoba. I find I am here with consternation today to be told that we are not going to continue in this particular venue, and I guess that is where I am with the matter. I am feeling that we need to continue the discussion around what kind of dollars are going to be available for these citizens in this part of Manitoba and other parts that were befallen by the excessive rainfall of 1999 here in the province of Manitoba and how we are going to go about getting a subsidiary agreement, whether it is with the other provinces and Manitoba that the Minister has not had much success in regard to at the ministerial meetings, or in regard to the Prime Minister himself. With him being in town today, I felt that it was very relevant that we proceed in discussing this matter in marketing and management today. If the Minister is not prepared to answer questions of how we can help these people in southwest Manitoba, that is her decision today, and I will defer to her to see whether or not she would allow me to proceed in discussing these issues.

Clearly, my first question would be where is she at and can she indicate what were the reasons that the federal government indicated they would not participate in a 90-10 funding program.

* (15:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member raises the issue of the southwest part of the

province. We had what I felt was a very thorough discussion on that issue on Thursday. I indicated to him that at that time the federal government indicated to us they are not interested. The Prime Minister is in Manitoba today, as the Member indicated, and the Premier has indicated he is meeting with the Prime Minister. They will be discussing those issues. The federal government indicated to us there were other programs in place, and they were not prepared to discuss this matter. You know, when we look at Farm Management, I want to say that our Agriculture people certainly recognize the difficulties of the people in the southwest part of the province and work very hard to come up with solutions.

If we look at the mission statement under Farm Management, it is to proactively develop, maintain, and deliver farm-management tools which enhance the competitiveness of Manitoba farmers by strengthening the business and human resource skills. Through that mission statement, I believe that our department and our staff are working with those people in the southwest part of the province to address their concerns. It is certainly a challenging time, but I have confidence in the people in the Department, that they will continue to develop resource material and work with the people in not only the southwest part of the province, but in all of the province to develop resources to help them meet those challenges.

Specifically to the Member's question, the federal government has indicated that the situation in the southwest part of the province does not fall within the guidelines of their disaster assistance program and that they are not interested in any program, whether it is 90-10 or 50-50 or any other program. Hopefully, our Premier will have better discussions and be able to have good discussions on this matter with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden on item 3.4.(a) Marketing and Farm Management.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the Chairman for that, allowing me to proceed, and I thank the Minister for her answer in regard to the 90-10 funding. But she also included the 50-50 funding as an

area that the federal government was not willing to proceed on. I am wondering if she can give us any kind of detail as to why the federal government would not be prepared to look at 50-50 funding, given that that is exactly the kind of funding that was developed under the JERI program in the Red River Valley in 1997.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the funding formula, I guess I would tell the Member to ask the federal members. We have raised this issue with them, and they have come to Manitoba telling people that there was hope of a program. Mr. Axworthy had a meeting here and then announced that there was going to be funding for the southwest part of the province. It did not happen. I have indicated that they told us they are not interested in the 50-50 or 90-10 or any supports because they believe that the other programs that are in place right now should compensate the producers. I do not agree with them, but for their reasoning they did not give us any specific reason other than, no, they were not going to participate now.

Mr. Maguire: The Minister has just indicated, and I concur, that Mr. Axworthy did send some of his staff out to southwest Manitoba and met with a few of the farmers there. She referred to the fact that Mr. Axworthy had funding available for the farmers in southwest Manitoba. I am wondering if she can indicate to us what kind of funding she is referring to. I will ask it again.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Arthur-Virden, for the purpose of recording.

Mr. Maguire: Just for the record. I was just asking, the Minister has just indicated that Mr. Axworthy was in southwest Manitoba, and she indicated in her answer previous that there was some kind of funding available for farmers, in Mr. Axworthy's words, not hers. I am wondering if she can indicate through her discussions what kind of funding that might have been.

Ms. Wowchuk: I was not privy to those discussions, but I know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in this building and said to the media that he was hopeful there would be funding for the southwest part of the province. We were hopeful that he could deliver on that commitment that he made in the hallway here in

the Legislature. However, when we got to Ottawa, the three ministers we had met with told us that they had taken it to their Cabinet three times, and each time the answer was no.

Mr. Maguire: I, too, having been in Ottawa at the end of February with the farmers in southwest Manitoba, can concur that there was difficulty in getting the federal government to understand the need and the desire. I felt we were very successful in being in Ottawa. The purpose of that trip was to differentiate between the overall problem of low incomes that we were there to try to address in October and through the winter. Really what CMAP, the adjustment payment on transportation, does is to address low commodity prices. I commend the Minister and the Government of Manitoba for their efforts in trying to find that kind of funding and put their \$40 million on the table forward, but that has got nothing to do with targeting southwestern Manitoba in regard to the disaster area.

I would wonder, the Minister has indicated that Mr. Axworthy made a statement in the halls, so I am assuming then that she did not meet with Mr. Axworthy here in Winnipeg at that time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I met with Mr. Axworthy in Ottawa.

Mr. Maguire: So would that have been the first time that the Minister of emergency services met with Mr. Axworthy as well?

Ms. Wowchuk: That was the first time that Mr. Axworthy was available for a meeting with myself and the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Maguire: So purely what he did then, Mr. Chairman, to Madam Minister is he had sent some staff out to southwest Manitoba to try to determine what the concerns of those farmers were and came back to the Legislature here and put some misleading information as a result of the meetings that we had where they were not coming forward with anything on the record or in the press here in Winnipeg at that time.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would never say that the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs was

putting misleading information out. What I said to the Member was that the Minister had a meeting with the Premier. I am not exactly sure of the date of that meeting, but he had discussions about the southwest part of the province, then indicated—in fact there is a press release on that matter. If we were in the right section and we had the right staff here, we might be able to determine the exact date of when that was. Because I do not have the right staff here to deal with it, I may not put completely accurate information on the record, Mr. Chairman.

The meeting with the Premier and Mr. Axworthy was much earlier than the time he sent his staff to the southwest part of the province. When he sent his staff out to the southwest part of the province was just before he met with the Premier the second time and talked about the need for both myself and the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) to come to Ottawa.

But the Member should realize that this is not Mr. Axworthy's portfolio. This portfolio belongs to Mr. Eggleton. In the letter dated March 29, Mr. Eggleton indicated that weed control, lost applied fertilizers, forage restorations are not eligible under the disaster assistance financial arrangements. Coverage was denied on the basis that these arrangements do not apply to insurable losses or to costs recoverable in whole or part under other government programs. These outstanding flood-related expenses are not insurable and to date have not been addressed under the federal government program. It was Mr. Eggleton in his letter that indicated that these costs would not be covered, not Mr. Axworthy. They are indicating that they were outside the program and we continued to lobby on that issue. I hope our Premier is successful in raising the issue with the Prime Minister today.

* (15:20)

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, so it would be your feeling then, in your answer you have indicated it was the Premier that met with Mr. Axworthy prior to going to Ottawa, prior to Mr. Axworthy's staff going out in the country. Did they give any indication of the kind of meeting that was going to be held in Ottawa,

or why did the two ministers go to Ottawa? I know there was a bit of hope expressed by Mr. Axworthy in the papers at that particular time, but surely there were some discussions of the kinds of dollars that would be required and the mechanism to pay these dollars out in the farm community with Mr. Axworthy before going. Can the Minister tell us directly what kind of initiative she felt might come out of the meeting? What was the reason for going to Ottawa if they knew beforehand that there was not going to be any dollars coming out?

Ms. Wowchuk: I am really surprised at the Member, Mr. Chairman. The Member is saying: Why did we go to Ottawa? Here he is asking us to negotiate with the federal government over and over again to try to get some support for the southwest part of the province. We go to Ottawa to try to negotiate something and he says: What did you go for? We went to stand up for the people of the southwest part of the province. The federal government had given some indication that there might be some support there. We went to lobby them. We got to Ottawa. By the time we got there, the federal ministers, three ministers indicated that they had taken this issue to the federal Cabinet, and the federal Cabinet had said no.

Well, surely to goodness the Member, Mr. Chairman, is not saying that we should have not gone to Ottawa to try to get this, because he is saying two different things. First, he is saying we should push harder to Ottawa to get some support for his constituents and then he is saying, well, why did you go to Ottawa if you were not going to get anything? Well, we went to Ottawa earlier on in the fall as part of a delegation—and he was part of that delegation—looking for \$300 million to support the low-commodity prices. Yes, the two issues were separate, but we lobbied for that. We got a hundred million dollars.

So I am not quite sure why he is saying why did you go if you were not going to get anything. I am not sure what the Member is asking, Mr. Chairperson. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: The Member should ask for recognition before he speaks.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, clearly, there are a number of issues that the Minister has raised here, one of them being the \$300 million. When we were in Ottawa she indicated to me that while we were there and we were looking at finding funds for low-commodity prices—but obviously I was chosen to go by my caucus. The whole issue of going in the first place arose from the fact that we had a disaster in southwest Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. Without that disaster, I doubt whether we would have been able to be successful in getting as many funds for all the farmers generally because of low-commodity prices. The farmers were parading in the highways in parts of southwest Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan because of a flood, because of a disaster to start with. It built into this overall program of low-commodity prices that affected everyone, and it certainly does, Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister. I do not have any debate with that issue at all.

But in Ottawa the Minister had indicated to me that if we were successful in getting some \$300 million on the table from the federal government—she and the Premier indicated that we have to make sure we get a commitment for those kinds of dollars on the table—then we will use part of that money to target southwest Manitoba, and we will figure out a way that we can do that. But that has never been done.

I am asking the Minister: Does she not recall having made that commitment to me in Ottawa that there would be funds made available out of these kinds of dollars as long as we could get them from the federal government?

Mr. Chairperson: May I remind the members of the Committee that we are on item 3.4.(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits. If they want to discuss item 3.8. (a) Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance, then let us pass all these things and let us go there. Thank you.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your guidance, and I certainly wish that is where we would go. I would certainly be prepared to pass sections (a), (b), and (c) and move to the section that would get us to the issue of farm

safety nets and the disaster assistance because then we would have the appropriate staff in the Chamber that could help us with this matter.

The Member talked about the meeting in Ottawa, and I want to remind the Member that at that particular meeting we were very much keeping the two issues separate. We said the disaster assistance was one section and the southwest part of the province was another whole issue that had to be addressed. But I want to also tell the Member that in the southwest part of the province I think that we have some excellent staff that works with the people and works to develop new resources and new initiatives, and certainly I would like to share with the Member some of the resources that we have developed.

I am not sure if the Member is aware that, through the Department, the Farm Management staff has provided leadership in the Manitoba Beef Prospects initiative. This is a major initiative, a co-operative effort by industry, Manitoba Cattle Producers and government to identify the opportunities and strengthen the beef industry.

The Manitoba Beef Prospects initiative was launched in Dauphin at the Challenge of Production program. The Manitoba Management staff is also taking a leadership in Manitoba Forage Advantage which will showcase the many advantages of forage production in Manitoba. I know that the people of the southwest part of the province are facing many challenges, and I hope that they will have a successful crop this year. The Member indicates the amount of rain that they have had. I hope that that will certainly help those forage crops. That is a very important part of the industry in his part of the province, one of the diversifications the producers have taken on.

I hope that the Manitoba Beef Prospects initiative that the Manitoba Farm Management staff has worked on will be helpful for those producers as will other programs that have been put forward by the Department. Farm Management now has 66 publications plus a computer program called Farm Plan for the producers in Manitoba to take advantage of.

I hope these programs we are putting forward through the Department will be of use to the producers in the southwest part of the province, who I know faced a very serious challenge last year, but hopefully they will have a good crop year this year, hopefully the issue that the member raises can be addressed, and hopefully we can move on into the future with more diversification in that part of the province which I think is what most producers want to do.

Mr. Maguire: I can certainly assure the Minister from the travels I have had in the last few months this spring as we have been sitting, that there are many new fence lines going up in southwest Manitoba. There are new cattle sheds going up. There are new hog barns going up. There are new special crops processing plants being developed. There is and will continue to be a lot more diversification in that region, and much of it will be spurred from two issues: one, the changing of the Crow in 1995, August 1, where it was completely taken away, and the second, from the shifts and changes that will take place because of the fact that there is a very great disparity between the kinds of farming operations that are out there today between those who have the resources perhaps through good planning and savings, and have been fortunate enough over many, many decades to have put those resources away to get them through the kind of disaster that we have just come through and have a few dollars to continue to capitalize on the changes in their operation that are required to succeed in the future and not just to succeed, but to be there in the future, and those who perhaps through no fortune of their own may have just chosen to start farming at the wrong time or made one or two overinvestments that might have put them in a bit of an unstrategic position financial-wise in regard to having the ability to get through the kind of disaster that we were faced with in Manitoba last year, in southwest Manitoba particularly, in regard to loss of income, having to sell capital or whatever required to get through that particular area.

The question that I had for the Minister would not require any staff to be here present to answer that question because she and I were the only ones with the Premier (Mr. Doer) that had that discussion and it was purely, does she recall

saying that if we were able to get a portion of the \$300 million on the table in Ottawa that we were there in October to ask for, that she would use some of those funds or find a way to target some of that money in southwest Manitoba? That certainly does not require staff to answer that question.

* (15:30)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when we went to Ottawa, we wanted to be very clear to the federal government that we were addressing two separate issues. There were two issues that needed to be addressed. There needed to be the issue of the low commodity prices and the shortfall that farmers were feeling because of declining commodity prices, removal of the Crow and lack of support by the federal government. We also told them that we wanted to ensure that they recognized there was a disaster in the southwest part of the province, and we felt that the producers in the southwest part of the province had to be treated the same way as the producers that had suffered the flood in the Red River Valley were treated.

But, Mr. Chairman, these producers are facing challenges, and I am very proud of the work the Department is doing under the Farm Business Management section of this department and developing new programs and working with the producers to help to diversify their farm programs. Whether it be to diversify into livestock or looking at various value-added options, our department is working very closely with producers and providing a lot of resources and hopefully will help them make it through this very difficult and challenging time.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Very publicly, that was the case. We were there to fight two issues. We were there to try to find funding for a natural disaster as well as the low commodity prices in all of Canada in regard to the trade war situation that we are faced with. I do not think that was any surprise.

But I go back to why we were there in the first place, and that had a great deal to do with the fact that there was a disaster in southwest Manitoba of untold proportion. In fact, many of the senior senior citizens in our constituency can

never remember anything like what happened in 1999, and it was dealt a terrible blow. There have been both young and older farmers this spring who have indicated to me that they have had to leave the industry and leave the business because of the impacts. It is not over yet. The slowness of watching the trickle of water disappear as opposed to the flood that came down the Red River Valley in southwest Manitoba will take a long time.

Many in the financial industry and agriculture today will indicate that if you made a fairly significant mistake in managing your operation some 15 or 20 years ago, you might have been able to get over it in one or two years, maybe three, but if you make the same mistake today, you could be a decade getting over it. These people have gone through that magnitude of disaster and change in their farming operations today and, through no fault of their own, it will take those who can survive at least a decade in many cases, even if we do have a disproportionately high yield in the crops that are out there this year in the ground.

I have already indicated that many of those farmers could not get on the ground to sow some of those crops, even before the inch and a half of rain that fell in the Lyleton-Pierson area last evening. Most of the rest of that area, if they did not get it last night, they received an inch and a half to two inches of rain over the last ten days. So, there is ground now that cannot be got on to be sprayed, similar to last year's condition where they got it seeded and could not get back to sow it.

My question is purely to the Minister. I know darn well there were two reasons why we went to Ottawa. I was asked to speak on behalf of my region on both of those issues, and I was proud to be able to do so, proud to be able to participate in that process, proud to be able to speak up for the people of southwest Manitoba on those issues. I am not satisfied with the answers we got from the federal government, and I know the Minister is not either.

My question to her was: Does she not remember indicating to me while we were in Ottawa that there would be dollars targeted to southwest Manitoba if we could just make sure

that we could get the commitment of these \$300 million from the federal government? The number one priority was to make sure we had the agreement with Ottawa that we could get the \$300 million, and then that we would find the means, Mr. Chairman, to find a way to put some of those funds into southwest Manitoba farmers' hands. Does she not remember that?

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member will recall that we had meetings with producers prior to going with Ottawa, and there was never any agreement on how the funds were going to be distributed. Saskatchewan was not lobbying for funds for their flooding; they were lobbying for funds for the lost inputs and for the trade issues of subsidies that were putting our producers at a disadvantage. The two issues that the Member is raising are two very distinct issues. Certainly had there been \$300 million that had come, we could have had those discussions. But he will have to agree that when we met with the producers there was no agreement on how funds were going to be distributed.

I also remind the Member that we introduced in this Legislature a resolution that would urge the federal government to provide assistance under DFAA for losses related to applied fertilizers and land restorations resulting from the 1999 flood. We asked for all parties to support that resolution in this House, so that we could go to Ottawa and lobby the federal government. Maybe if we had that resolution when we went to Ottawa, that might have made a difference with the federal government. But the members opposite refused to pass that resolution in this House. In fact, we still have not passed a resolution to indicate that the members opposite are clearly in support of the people of the southwest part of the province and really want the federal government to put money forward. So there are issues that the Opposition could help us with. Certainly passing of that resolution and giving us the ability to go to Ottawa with all parties' support would have been very helpful for us, but the members opposite chose not to do that. We were not able to say to the federal government we have all parties' support.

The federal government has made some contradicting comments between the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Minister responsible for

disaster assistance. We continue to try to deal with that with the federal government. Hopefully, our Premier will be successful in raising this issue with the Prime Minister today.

I want to say that under this department of Farm Management, the mission of the Farm Management is to provide, maintain and develop proactive farm management tools which enhance the competitiveness of Manitoba farmers by strengthening their business and human resource management skills. I know that the producers of southwestern Manitoba are facing very serious challenges. But farmers are very resilient, determined people. I know that the work that this department is doing will help those producers adjust to the challenge that they faced last year and help them make adjustments to the decreased support that we continue to see from the federal government and the programs. The brochures and pamphlets developed by the Department, as well as the Web site, are a help for the producers.

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: I have no doubt, Mr. Chairman, the resolution that the Minister refers to might have been a bit of an aid to her. But she has already indicated that the federal government was not going to pay for losses of fertilizer and land restoration and those eligible costs from lost farm inputs under the DFAA program. So, I think that that part of therefore be resolved in her own motion is why she understands that we put amendments forward from our side of the House that would have been much more positive.

I have to remind you, for the record, that it was her government that defeated those resolutions several minutes before she got on the plane to fly to Ottawa. *[interjection]* She got absolutely nothing for the farmers of southwest Manitoba; got on the plane; flew to Ottawa trying to get nothing—*[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Please, one speaker at a time. The Member for Arthur-Virden has the floor.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that is very seriously why I am asking the

question. The Minister has indicated that farmers did not agree with the kind of funding mechanism that would be used to pay out funds to farmers, if we had been successful in getting the \$300 million in that trip last October. That was not my question. My question was, did the Minister not remember indicating to me—*[interjection]* on the first evening that we were in Ottawa last fall, to say that if we were successful in getting some of these funds for Manitoba, a portion of them could be used and would be used by her government to target the issue of disaster in southwest Manitoba. Does she or does she not remember making that statement to me?

Ms. Wowchuk: Certainly I remember having discussions with the Member. I certainly remember talking about how important it was that we get money for the producers of Manitoba. If I recall correctly, I think one of the things I said was let us get the money. Let us get the \$300 million, and then we will work out how to distribute it. Certainly there was never any agreement amongst the producers about how the funds would have been allocated, but the two issues were very distinct. There is the issue of the declining income of farmers and the issue of the southwest part of the province that are two very separate issues. The Member, if he will recall at the meetings that we had—the producers also said be sure you keep the two issues very separate.

Mr. Maguire: The Minister has indicated that there was agreement by the farm groups to keep, and the farmers that were in attendance and all of us that we keep the two issues separate, and there was. I would concur with that. However, it was her indication to me that evening in Ottawa that if we were successful in getting the lump sum of funds—and we were not there saying we want \$300 million for the low-commodity prices and another \$100 million for the disaster in southwest Manitoba, we were there with two issues, seeking one pool of funds, looking at \$300 million.

Her indication to me was that there would be a mechanism designed, subsequent to getting those funds, to pay portions of it to the farmers in southwest Manitoba, indeed all of Manitoba where that natural disaster had occurred. So I am

merely asking the Minister if she does not remember making that commitment to me.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we went to Ottawa jointly with Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was asking for \$1 billion. Manitoba was asking for \$300 million to deal with the reduced support from the federal government and to help Manitoba and Saskatchewan producers fight the U.S. subsidies, the European subsidies and the losses that we had faced because of federal reductions in transportation, the elimination of the Crow, those are the issues that we went to Ottawa for. Saskatchewan did not raise the issue of flood assistance for the southeast part of their province. So we were there with a common goal in mind to try to get the federal government to recognize that they had a responsibility to help the grain producers of western Canada through this economic downturn. That was the purpose.

Certainly we did have discussions, and my hope was that we could get the \$300 million and then work on a formula to distribute that money. But there was never any agreement by the producers as to how the funds should be distributed. It was my hope that we would get that whole amount of money and then be able to address the various issues that we had and work out a distribution. But I recall talking to the Member saying, let us get the money first, we will worry about distribution once we get it. And the goal definitely was to get \$300 million for Manitoba and \$1 billion for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Maguire: Very clearly I think that this kind of selective memory, if you will, is why the farmers in southwest Manitoba are so very sceptical about the lip service that has been given to them about getting any kind of aid in southwest Manitoba today—I mean if the Minister cannot even remember making the commitment to me for how we would distribute some of these funds. I realize that there were no agreements between the farm groups. I have been a leader of a farm organization in Canada for quite some time. My fellow critic in this department here in Manitoba was the founding leader of the largest, at that time, voluntary farm group in Manitoba. So I think that we have a fair amount of experience in relation to the kinds of tacks that are taken in these kinds of discussions, and we have been in them many times before.

We were both there when the GRIP program was developed in Canada and the NISA program and other issues. So I take very seriously when a minister indicates to me in a private conversation that if we just, you know, come up with the \$300 million and find a means of getting those dollars that we will find a way to distribute some of them to people that have been struck by a disaster. I want to go back to this one more time, Mr. Chairman. Does the Minister not recognize that there was a commitment there that evening to distribute, to find a way, in dealing with the farm groups or her own government, to, No. 1, get a portion of funds, which subsequently we were not able to get from that particular meeting, and pay them directly to some of the farmers and find a mechanism to pay those dollars to farmers directly in southwest Manitoba who were hurt by the disaster? Does she or does she not remember that?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, the issues were very distinct. There were two issues. There was assistance for all farmers in western Canada, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who had suffered because of a downturn in prices and the subsidies that Canada had taken away versus the subsidies of Europe and the United States. Those were the issues. There was the issue of \$300 million, and quite frankly it is not there now. Now the Member talks about a private conversation. Well, I guess I will be careful about having private conversations with the Member if he is going to, then, put all the private conversations on the record.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that this is an extremely important issue. The farmers in southwest Manitoba have been hung out to dry, so to speak, and they are still not dry, if I might use that pun. The situation here of one side gives lip service to saying, oh, we know your problem, and the other side gives lip service to saying we sympathize with your problem, while in the meantime this farmer has to go and get off-farm employment, and this farmer has to sell off portions of his land, this one has to rent out some of his land to family members, and we are going on with a number of the business community that have closed their doors. These are happening, like I referred to earlier, like the trickle of rainfall that came down in a torrent last year as opposed to the massive

water that you see in a flood running down the Red River, as an example, in 1997. This is like drip torture if I could use the analogy. These people are slowly, slowly, slowly watching their families have to leave, watching themselves having to leave, watching their businesses erode, watching their families leave and their communities dissolve, in some cases, because of the fact that there was a natural disaster that occurred that was completely beyond any of their means to control.

An Honourable Member: And she herself was the beneficiary of a sympathetic Conservative government—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The Member for Emerson is out of order. The Member for Arthur-Virden has the floor.

* (15:50)

Mr. Maguire: So, Mr. Chair, I am saying, you know, is the Minister happy with the fact that we were only able to get a hundred million dollars in a CMAP program that generally distributed funds all across the whole province of Manitoba for one of the kinds of programs that we went to Ottawa to get and we ended up with a third of what we got?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we went to Ottawa to lobby for two distinct programs to help the producers who were suffering because of lack of support from our federal government with the removal of the Crow and low commodity prices. Our producers should not be fighting the international treasuries of the European Union and the United States, which they are fighting. We are not happy with that. That is what we went to fight for.

We asked for \$300 million for support for producers. We actually got \$60 million because the Province had to put in \$40 million. Am I happy with that? Of course not. Why would I be happy with getting \$60 million when we went for \$300 million? The fact of the matter is that that is as much as we have been able to get from the federal government. Quite frankly, I think \$100 million into the rural economy of Manitoba is better than nothing.

Mr. Maguire: I would agree, Mr. Chair, that a \$100 million in the Manitoba economy is better than nothing. That is like the Minister agreeing with me the other day that if we had received the \$7 billion payout for the Crow benefit rather than what we got, we would have been better off today.

The federal government in its wisdom has given out dollars and aid to many issues around the world. We do it on a regular basis. We do it on droughts. We do it on floods. We do it on civil disobedience. We do it on wars. We do it with our military. We do it with our food aid. And we do it in all other areas of the world. In fact, Mr. Chairman, there have been examples of doing it right here in our own country—Saguenay, the ice storms in Québec, the floods of the Red River Valley. But when it comes to the flood that occurred in southwest Manitoba, we are just going to leave them out there to drip torture. If we have a federal government that does not care about southwest Manitoba, that is one issue. But the farmers in southwest Manitoba feel that they are still part of the province of Manitoba. There has been no aid forthcoming but continued lip service on these kinds of discussions, on this very important issue, as I have indicated, while they watch their families leave in some cases as many issues cause changes in their local communities.

The federal government did not stand by and watch as Canadians in other areas of the world were put into a libellous position because of some other country's negotiations. You come to the aid of these people immediately and you try to deal with the concern. Sometimes that is what you have to do.

Mr. Chairman, the Conservative government that was here last year came to the aid of these people in southwest Manitoba. There was a \$71-million package that was negotiated. The Minister is very right when she concurs that her party at that time in opposition came to an all-party agreement with the government that aid should go to the area of southwest Manitoba. There is no dispute of that.

The Minister's resolution is calling for us to come forward and support a motion that she has put forward that clearly in her own

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED portion of the motion has already been denounced as not workable by the federal government, and, in fact, was not the kind of negotiation that was agreed upon 1997. It is my understanding that the Minister of course wants all-party support for her motion. There are ways of finding all-party support in the province of Manitoba for this issue, but it is not in the manner that the Minister has dealt with it to date.

I have to remind her that the reason we do not have all-party support today is because there are no dollars on the table for these citizens in this region. There was \$71 million last year. It was very easy for her then in opposition to surround herself with the Conservative government and have her leader come to Melita in June 1999, as he did, to say there would be all-party support for this action. But there are no dollars on the table now.

Apart from the fact that the Minister has selective memory, the farmers of that region are tired of this kind of lip-service, as I reiterate the statement that I made earlier, and are clearly wanting and still requiring—as I have indicated the disastrousness of this situation, the immediate need that is there, the eminent need for these dollars and this infusion of dollars to be put forward. I have outlined the analogies earlier in this question why these kinds of supports are needed.

So, if the Minister truly meant or had any sincerity in her comments to me in Ottawa last fall, then let us not mislead each other by the fact that we were looking at two issues because we know there are two issues out there. There is another issue as well. A third issue is coming up with a long-term solution to these matters. Farmers, how can they help but be sceptical about where we are going to be in negotiating a long-term solution to safety nets, particularly in agriculture, or even a disaster mechanism that is required in agriculture, if they feel that they have been hung out to dry by their own minister and her government, when they will not come to the aid of putting some immediate dollars on the table in regard to this disaster?

So my question to the Minister is: Would she recognize that if there was some kind of

commitment from her government to put dollars on the table, like occurs in many of the circumstances that I have just outlined, that it would help these farmers in southwest Manitoba, that if her government would come to the table with some dollars on this issue, even if they were not able to be matched by the federal government, that it would help this area of Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss this matter. We have talked about it many times in this House. The taxpayers of Manitoba have put in \$71 million. We hope that the federal government will recognize that the taxpayers of Manitoba have supported the southwest region of the province and that the federal government would use the tax dollars that they collect to help out in this disaster, as they will in other disasters. But the Member should not be trying to say that the Province and the people of Manitoba have the responsibility of disasters.

The Member talks about money on the table. We went to Ottawa prepared to negotiate on this particular issue, whether it be 50-50, whether it be a JERI-type program, whether it be a disaster assistance. The federal government has said no, no, no. They told us that their federal government Cabinet rejected it three times. I hope that our Premier is able to convince the Prime Minister to reconsider his government's decision on this particular disaster.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, very clearly, the only discussions that I am aware of are the 90-10 discussion and the 50-50 discussion. I am not aware of any other discussions that may have taken place between the governments in regard to this issue. Certainly, there were no other issues that took place between myself and the farmers of southwest Manitoba, who attended the meetings in Ottawa with the federal counterparts in February. I believe that the provincial government has been misleading somewhat in regard to the kinds of stories that they are telling the farmers of Manitoba.

* (16:00)

They are saying that the money coming under DFAA—the federal government has indicated that they will not support farmers under the DFAA. Well, clearly, Mr. Chairman, the only funding there was a 90-10 proposal, and the federal government has met its obligations for municipal replacement of infrastructure and private property in regard to lost fences, roads, ditches, culverts and those kinds of issues.

Can the Minister indicate to us any kind of background on the discussions that she had with her federal counterparts on 50-50 funding and why the federal government would not come forward with a 50-50 funding process, as was agreed in the new subsidiary agreement that took place in 1997 in the Red River Valley?

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, Mr. Chairman, the Member is asking me why the federal government decided not to fund a 50-50 program. We went to Ottawa. We pointed out that under DFAA there was a section that we thought that they could find the lost input costs and the restoration of the soil. They chose not to do that one. We talked to them about the types of programs that they had in the Red River Valley, which the Member knows, and some of them were 50-50 programs. The federal government chose not to support those. I would ask him—the federal government, what they told us was that in the Red River flood there was not a program like AIDA. They felt that they were putting their money through that program. There was no need for them to cover any other programs off.

I do not agree with the federal government on that decision, but that was part of the reasoning that they gave us as to why they would not put more money in. But, certainly, we pointed out to them the section of the Act that we felt that they could cover things off under DFAA, and we talked to them about other programs.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, I find it a little ironic. I have my answer to the Minister. When I become minister, I will be more than glad to answer her questions of me as far as the procedure if she wants to ask me questions, as she indicated in this answer. I would be more than glad to answer them a couple of years down the road on these issues. I guess I asked a simple

question as to what kind of negotiations and discussions she had in regard to why the federal government did not come forward or feel that it was necessary to come forward with their share of funding on a 50-50 program. The Minister felt it was a difficult situation to answer that question, but I think she has, partly, because she indicated that the federal government has indicated that AIDA is our salvation, and that the federal government thinks that AIDA will solve the problems of those people in southwest Manitoba because it is targeting funds into that particular region.

I guess I have had this discussion with some of our federal counterparts, her federal counterparts as well, some of the members from Manitoba, and those members changed their minds in the federal government when we discussed why that program did not work, and why it does not deliver the kinds of dollars in southwest Manitoba that the federal government thought it would. It has to do a great deal with some of the concerns and situations around the way some of the programs came out last year, and the fact that the federal government would not recognize the disaster payments that came from the Manitoba government a year ago as, in fact, disaster payments, and not be recorded as income for the purposes of disaster programs.

So, if the Minister herself does not understand these programs, and is not able to convince her federal counterparts in negotiations as to why these farmers are still in angst about this situation, about why one program basically evaporated the funds from its counterpart, then I guess I would say that she should resign because that is not a very good way to treat the farmers of southwest Manitoba, if you have not had a clear understanding of how these programs impact on each other, or if you have not been able to convince the federal counterparts that this is indeed what is occurring.

So I would ask the Minister further, and I will go back to my first question of the day, Mr. Chairman. That is why I am here and why I wanted to ask these, and it is: Did she not or can she tell us what kind of discussions and negotiations took place as to why the federal government will not put their share on the table

in regard to the 50-50 program, and the kinds of negotiations she had around the AIDA program?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, if the Member wants some detail, I guess I will tell him. We have written letters to the government. I have had phone conversations with my counterparts. We have visited Ottawa to talk about this situation. Certainly there have been three Ag ministers meetings where the issue of the disaster assistance has been discussed, and certainly the southwest part of the province has been discussed. We talked about the whole disaster, the southwest part of the province's need for that kind of support. We talked about the need for general support for our farmers. We went to Ottawa. We looked for \$300 million. We got the \$100 million program but in that lobby and the need for support for our producers we talked about the support that the U.S. farmers get from their federal government and that that money comes from the federal treasury. We talked about the European community and the support that they get.

We talked about supply management and how three quarters of the benefits of supply management go to Quebec and Ontario. We talked about the change of federal support and how the losses of what Manitoba faces are equal to all of the losses to the eastern provinces. The Member knows, as I indicated to him yesterday, that the group of eight other provinces are not prepared to address those issues, and the group of eight was not interested in supporting us in disaster assistance.

* (16:10)

The Member is indicating also that he does not think that AIDA should be counted as income. The money that was forwarded under the acreage payment last spring should not be counted as income. Is that what you were saying Larry? That made it difficult withdrawing from AIDA. In the earlier parts of his comments, Mr. Chairman, he said something about the \$50-an-acre payment impacting on AIDA. I am not quite sure. He might want to clarify that.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I thank you and may I once again say that in a couple years time when I become the Minister I would be more

than glad to answer these kinds of questions. I guess if it is for clarification, clearly what I was asking the Minister to do was to indicate to us that it was not that these funds were not going to be included as income under AIDA, but that the funds that came out were not considered disaster funds and therefore were included as income for AIDA purposes and therefore reduced the levels of support that farmers were going to pay from the duplication of the programs.

I know something that would have helped the farmers in southwest Manitoba, and the Minister has received letters on this, I know, would have been the ability of those programs to have been financially independent from the AIDA program. Certainly that money would be income for taxation purposes in the hands of the farmers. The farmers never once doubted that, but for disaster purposes, these dollars that came through some of the programs provincially were taken as income against AIDA and therefore reduced the amount of AIDA that the federal government had to pay. So in her negotiations with the federal government, has she not thrown back at them that the federal government has got off lucky by not having to pay these kinds of dollars in the past and therefore should be quite willing to come to the table to support farmers in southwest Manitoba in this disaster aid.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would like to remind the Member that it was his government that negotiated MFDAP and that the MFDAP would be credited towards AIDA. It was his government that made that negotiation. *[interjection]* You negotiated it.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the Member for Emerson wish to speak?

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I certainly do. I am really pleased that the Minister said what she did. Until now, she and her government have been wanting to take the credit for the \$70-some-odd million that was extended to farmers in the southwest in the spring and summer of the year before we recognized the full impact of the disaster that was really happening in the southwest and the southeast of Manitoba, but it was a government that had heart and indicated clearly to the people that we would recognize the hurt that they were experiencing, and we would

support them. We gave them \$50 an acre to tide them over and to help them bear the cost of paying the bills, of inputs that they had applied in spring and/or during the fall of the year to raise a crop that year. We covered those costs. We tried to help farmers cover those costs. Similarly, we did that in ensuring they would get a crop in the ground and supported them in putting a custom seeding program in place.

We also recognized that forage crops could not survive under lengthy periods under water. To those farmers that were dependent on those forage crops for livestock food, we said: We will give you money; we will help you reinstate those forage crops. Till now, the Minister has taken credit for it, saying they had provided \$70 million to farmers in flood stricken by 1999.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: If the Member would check back on Hansards and any of the comments that I have made, what I have said is the taxpayers of Manitoba put forward the money that covered the \$50 an acre or the \$71 million. What I have said is that it was the previous government that negotiated it and, as a result of their negotiations, that the MFDAP would be credited towards AIDA.

Mr. Chairperson: Dispute over facts like that are not points of order.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, it is clear that the Minister has constantly had selective memory, and again she is now having selective memory. That is her business. If she wants to portray herself in that manner, she can do that. However, the fact remains that the farmers in the southwest part of the province are still suffering. The fact remains that this minister has not dealt fairly with the people and portrayed the issues fairly to the people of southwest Manitoba as well as southeast Manitoba, and many other areas and farmers that were hurt. We have continually told the Minister, and even by amending the resolution, correcting the mistakes that she had made in drafting the resolutions that we have debated continually in this House. We have constantly said that it was our intent to

ensure that those farmers that were hurt by the 1999 flood would be dealt with in the same manner that we dealt with people in the 1997 flood.

Indeed, the Minister has short memory, and we need to ask her whether she had to, on her farm, designate those funds that she received from government and/or her family received from government, whether those funds were, in fact, designated as taxable income—whether it was for land restoration or many others. I would suspect that she might find that they were not. Similarly, the funds that were extended through \$50 an acre, part of which were AIDA funds, as the federal government and the province had agreed to at the time—they were AIDA funds being used, and that those AIDA funds are now being calculated as calculable income under disaster assistance. Therefore farmers are asking whether they are being treated as others were during that same period of time.

There was a loans program established for \$100,000 for each operation that has not been extended to western Manitoba. Interest-free loans were provided for in the Red River Valley. Similarly, restoration programs were provided which have not been provided to the Southwest, and that is really what is at issue here. Quite frankly, it was the Province that made many of those decisions.

In 1998, the Province in the Swan River Valley made a clear decision after meeting with the people there, after meeting with municipal councils and other community leaders. It clearly made the people in the Swan River Valley aware of the fact that we were going to help them. It was the Province that made those decisions. Then, later on, we went to the federal government and negotiated an agreement for assistance from the federal government under the terms of the normal assistance agreement. It took seven years, but the federal government finally did come to the table.

I suspect that the Minister might want to take that same leadership role here as we have asked time and time again: to play a leadership role; to be an advocate for her farmers; to be an advocate for rural Manitobans in times of need;

and, to demonstrate some sympathy. That is really what we have been asking for.

The Minister has put on the record on a number of occasions contradictory information indicating one day this was the response, next day this was the response. Similarly, the issues taken to Ottawa, it was clearly evident that it was DFA that they were wanting the federal government to share in. Had we wanted to do a 50-50 cost-shared agreement, it would have been very simple for the Province to simply announce that we are going to do a similar-type JERI program that we did in the Red River Valley. We could have implemented it here, but it does take leadership, Mr. Chairman. I would suspect that maybe even the Premier might have wanted to intervene, but he chose not to.

Mr. Chairperson: We are on item 3.4.(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits. Shall this item pass?

The Member for Arthur-Virden, as long as you stay on this item, otherwise we have to agree that we have to come to that disaster assistance fund. I have been very patient allowing discussion with this other than 3.4.(a).

* (16:20)

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you. I did not realize that there had been any agreement from the discussion.

You had asked the Member from Emerson to comment and he made a couple. I very much feel strongly that in regard to the issues we were talking about, there are still some points I would like to raise with the Minister. We talked about the 90-10 program. We have talked about 50-50. We have talked about the drawbacks of AIDA in relation to the funding that came out a year ago. My colleague has just indicated that rather than leaving these farmers wondering and out to dry, they came up with \$70 million on the spot basically in regards to the need in southwest Manitoba, and through all-party concurrence. There has been no doubt that that money has helped maintain as many farmers and businesses out there as are still there today.

There is no question about that. What the Minister is indicating to us is that she is not willing to come forward with the same kind of commitment and put dollars on the table, even though her government has already outlined the kind of disaster program that is needed in southwest Manitoba or for the citizens of the disaster areas of Manitoba.

I think that it is a bit of a misnomer to say that the \$100-million program that was negotiated will negate the problems that were seen in that particular region. Does the Minister feel that \$100 million will do that?

Mr. Chairperson: Does the Minister wish to proceed here without her staff on these kinds of topics?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have asked that we start to go line by line, that we indeed deal with 4.(a) and then move through those departments because we have staff waiting here. We have people from the Animal Industry branch; we have people from Veterinary Services; we have people from Soils and Crops here, but the members choose to disregard the value of these staffpeople and choose to have them sit in the gallery waiting for them to decide where they are wanting to go. We are on Marketing and Farm Business Management.

I have been asking, since we began this session, if we could show some respect for the staff so that they could complete their section of Estimates and then we could move on, and they could then go on and do the very important work that they do for the producers of Manitoba. If we could go through this, I would be very prepared to then bring the appropriate staff in to deal with disaster assistance which I believe is under section 8. I think that in fairness we should start showing some respect for the staff that is here in the Chamber who can answer the appropriate questions and then bring in the next section line by line, which I have asked for several times, if the members would co-operate with us in that fashion.

Mr. Chairperson: I want to hear the Opposition critic on this or the Member for Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Jack Penner: There is nobody that has a greater degree of respect for the staff of the Department of Agriculture, having spent virtually all my life in the agricultural industry and many hours around the tables with staff of the Department of Agriculture, whether it is livestock specialists or whether it is ag reps or working very closely with them on community development projects and many other issues, developing farm policy, developing farm direction. So let the Minister not put on the record that we have no appreciation for the staff of this department.

If the Minister would have chosen to do as we had initially indicated, that we would give her adequate time which staff to bring in, that we would debate and discuss the various issues instead of taking her own initiative and being stubborn about what she wants to discuss. That is her business. If she wants to waste the Department's valuable time and money, that is her business. She is the Minister. We respect that. We respect the Minister's office, but we are not here to be disruptive in the debate or the discussions, but we did clearly indicate to the Minister what the agenda would be. If the Minister wants to set that aside and reject that, that is her business. There is nobody, having spent a number of months on the road with many of these people discussing value-added initiatives across this province and many times agricultural staff with us, many times agricultural staff brought in to bring the expertise to the table in these discussions—they are highly valued in virtually all of the farm community.

The farm community has a great deal of respect for the Department of Agriculture and their staff. Let the Minister not put on the record that we have no regard for this. However, she is the Minister and if she chooses to go and put her own agenda forward without any consideration from the critic's office and/or the members opposite, then she will have to abide by the rules that are set in this House. We had initially asked for consideration of allowing us to roam relatively freely on the issue. We had indicated to the Minister clearly that we would tell her well in advance which staff to bring forward and which issues we would like to raise on given days, and she chose not to do that. She chose to choose her own agenda, and so we are here

today dealing with the issues that we want to bring forward, as we will continue to bring the issues forward that we think are relatively important.

We believe that the disaster that happened last year during the 1999 flood is more important than any other issue that we could debate, and therefore we are on that issue today, and we will be on that issue, Mr. Chairman, until we are satisfied that the Minister gives us the answers that we have been seeking.

Mr. Chairperson: The Chair is not submitting itself to any threat.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I believe that there is a way that we go through Estimates, and I believe we go through line by line in the book. I want to say that on Thursday we did give a lot of latitude, because the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) was here, the official critic was not here, and we did not think he wanted to pass 3.4, so we agreed to answer wide-ranging issues.

But I would like to read to the Member from May 31. The Acting Chair at that time said: "Is there leave of the Committee to set aside item No. 3, the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, for further consideration at a future time? With leave of the Committee, we will proceed with item No. 4, the Agricultural Development and Marketing. Is there leave to proceed with this section? Then we will deal with section 4. Thank you. Resolution 3.4 Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits."

The Member was in the House when we agreed to set that aside and we would go to this section. We finished with the others, and that was the agreement that we would do the Agricultural Credit Corporation, Crop Insurance, and then we would start to proceed line by line.

The Member talks about giving fair warning about which staff he wants in the Chamber. He has not contacted me at all about which line he wants to deal with. If there was some pressing issue that he wanted a particular staff, members on both sides of the House often discuss issues

and talk about which line they are going to be dealing with. When we did not have the Crop Insurance staff here on a particular day, I sent the Member a note and said, look we have not got the Crop Insurance staff here, we will not be able to deal with Agricultural Credit Corporation today.

Members work those kinds of things out. I have had no suggestion from the members opposite ahead of time which line they want to deal with, and I am asking, as I am sure would show a lot of respect for the staff that are here at the table and the ones that are waiting in the gallery, if we would deal with Marketing and Farm Business Management and then move onto the Animal Industry so that that staff could join us, and proceed in an orderly fashion. That is all I am requesting, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: The item before the Committee is 3.4(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700. Shall this item pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you have to have questions on this item.

Mr. Maguire: I would go back to asking a question on that very area then. When we are looking at the kinds of dollars that are being committed into southwest Manitoba, would the Minister indicate whether or not she believes that the \$100-million program that she negotiated with the federal government will meet the needs of the farmers in southwest Manitoba in that disaster area?

Mr. Chairperson: Does the Honourable Minister wish to answer the question?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Mr. Chairman.

* (16:30)

Mr. Maguire: There is a follow-up to that then. I assume, and we have had discussion on this, that the Minister negotiated in very good faith and under very tough conditions with her federal counterparts and members from other provinces.

Let us be fair. I mean, they are wanting to base it on dollars as opposed to risk, and the safety nets, discussions that we are having in the long term in agriculture in Canada today. I know that she came under pressure from her federal counterparts as well as the getting of AIDA she has referred to a few times, assuming that she and her counterpart from Saskatchewan are correct. But in her negotiations with these people to get the CMAP program, the \$400 million that came forward from the federal government between the two levels of government before she got acceptance of the federal government's \$60 million on that CMAP program for Manitoba farmers, was she not able to negotiate what would have been a common-sense term with her federal counterparts and others that this program was to deal with low commodity values across Canada, particularly here in Manitoba on the \$60 million that the federal government was going to put into this and that this program had nothing to do with the disaster program in southwest Manitoba, or the disaster program requirements, to meet the needs of these farmers who were hit by disaster in 1999.

Can she tell us whether or not she was able to negotiate this as a separate deal?

Mr. Chairperson: Does the Honourable Minister wish to answer this question without her staff?

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, I keep trying to ask questions that only the Minister would be able to answer, that I would assume that if I had been in that room in negotiations, as I have been on a number of occasions, that she would be able to answer a question that I asked directly of the Minister having been in the room. I would assume that in some of those fed-prov meetings that take place that there may be herself, and her deputy and a few of the safety net people there to discuss these issues, but this one should clearly be able to be answered by the Minister responsible in Manitoba because it pertains to the kinds of negotiations that took place. Not a factual number-crunching kind of mechanism but my question is clearly was this negotiated as a separate deal, separate from any of the disaster programs that might have come forward?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am really trying to co-operate with the Member, but I have asked for some co-operation as well, and I have asked out of respect for the staff that we deal with the Marketing, business-management section, and then move on to the Animal Industry and then Veterinary Services and move into the other ones.

We have spent an awful lot of time talking about the southwest part of the province. I know it is a very important issue. It is one that I have spent an awful lot of time discussing and a lot of time and negotiations on, and I hope that our Premier (Mr. Doer) will have success this afternoon raising the issue with the Prime Minister, but I would really like the members to think about the staff that have very important work to do on behalf of farmers, and in fact, staff that has to play a role in developing safety net programs and various other aspects of the agriculture industry. I would ask that they co-operate and either ask questions on that line or pass the line so we could move on, and the people who are at the table can then go about the very important business that we do and we can bring different people into the Chamber rather than having them wait in the gallery.

Mr. Chairperson: Reasonable people normally come to reasonable agreement, even to disagree. Are we being reasonable here?

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I guess on behalf of the citizens of the region that I represent and as deputy critic to Agriculture in the province of Manitoba which allows me to bring forth questions in this particular session on behalf of all farmers in Manitoba, as my critic to my right has done on many occasions in these Estimates, I clearly find it somewhat posturing by the Minister, if you will, in regard to not being able to answer some of the questions that clearly she as a Minister would have first-hand information on. I am not asking for details of clarification on the nuts and bolts of dollars and cents discussions on some of these issues, and I have the greatest respect for the staff that she is speaking of in Manitoba, but I also have respect for the farmers of the region that I am supposed to represent who, along with some of my other counterparts, through no ability to control it

themselves, were faced with a natural disaster of untold precedence.

I could say that we would come back to these kinds of negotiations in a further day at a further time, and I would be glad to do that, but I am saying to the Minister today that it should be very easy to answer a question, being: What other kinds of programs were talked about as far as disaster programs? I only asked about the \$100 million, because that one seems to be all we are going to get to solve the issues of low commodity prices on the grain side of our industry from 1999 with the federal government, and I know they are hard-nosed in those negotiations.

But can she tell us what other kinds of negotiations were talked about when it came to dealing with the disaster in southwest Manitoba; 90-10 has not been successful, 50-50 as we have talked about has not been successful, and she is saying that the federal government will not come to the table with their share of these funds. I only have a few questions, Mr. Chairman, in regard to the amount of dollars and the kind of mechanism we can use, and then I would be more than glad to move ahead in this whole area.

My question then, Mr. Chairman, is could I not just ask these few questions and perhaps, you know, in response to the answers that I get we could perhaps move on?

Mr. Chairperson: The item under discussion is 3.4 Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member talked about the \$100 million or the \$60 million that went to the entire province instead of the southwest part of the province. It had to go to the entire province because it had to be trade neutral. That is why that program had to be distributed across the province. Certainly there have been discussions on how we can get support for the southwest part of the province.

As I told the Member Thursday, and as I told him earlier today, we talked about a 90-10 program, we talked about a 50-50 program. Mr. Axworthy on March 10 indicated in the case of the '99 flood the Government of Canada has,

once again, agreed to provide assistance to the province of Manitoba in accordance with the DFAA guidelines. The Government of Canada is very pleased that through various programs, including DFAA, substantial help for the farmers will be provided as they prepare to seed their crop this spring. This is in contrast to this earlier indication.

Mr. Eggleton then wrote a letter on March 29 refusing to provide assistance on the basis of weed control, applied fertilizer and forage restoration, and he indicated the forage restorations were not eligible under DFAA. The federal government has indicated at various times that they are interested in programs. We have had discussions with the federal government at various times. They have said no. They have said they have taken it to their Cabinet three times, and they are not prepared to support this. We have pointed out where it could be covered under the legislation that exists. I think that has to be reviewed, but I certainly hope that our Premier is successful raising it with the Prime Minister today.

*(16:40)

Mr. Maguire: I thank the Minister for that. She has outlined the \$100-million program of CMAP and the cash advance and the forage programs. We are all aware of those, and I think it would be incumbent upon her, if she could do this. to outline to me what dollars this government has directed to farmers in southwest Manitoba, targeted because of the disaster, that were not available to all of the other farmers in all of Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we know that disasters are the responsibility of the federal government and the difficulties that producers are facing in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are a result of the federal government pulling out on their support to farmers in the Crow and in other supports. If you look at the support that the European community and the American community get from their national governments, there would certainly be a very different situation in Manitoba than there is with the situation that we have got right now. With respect to disasters, the Premier has said we are not here,—and I have said this, too. It is not the

province's job to step in and take over the responsibilities of disaster. It is the federal government that has a responsibility, and we always partner, provincial governments always partner with federal governments when it comes to disaster.

The Member asks what we have done. Certainly the \$71 million that went into the southwest part of the province helped with custom seeding and unseeded acreage, it helped with forage restoration and hay shortfall. The forage restoration and hay shortfall are similar to what the JERI programs were. In addition, since we have taken office, we have put \$40 million into the CMAP program. There have been enhancements to AIDA that have been distributed across the province. AIDA money, as a whole, is a support for the farmers, as is safety net farming. We have made some changes to crop insurance which I believe are good changes, the excess moisture insurance, the changes that we made in collecting of crop insurance premiums this year, recognizing that there were many producers that could not make their premium payment. We have given some flexibility in that. We have added in new crops that can now be covered under crop insurance. Under the section that we are dealing with, Farm Business Management, our staff is working diligently to help producers in their transition as they move from grain production into livestock production. I think that the programs that have been put forward through the Department, fact sheets, pamphlets, booklets, information, the Web site are all helpful to the producers of southwestern Manitoba, as they are to all producers of Manitoba.

Again I say to the Member he is well aware that the Premier (Mr. Doer) is meeting with the Prime Minister today. I hope that the Premier can convince the Prime Minister to go back to their Cabinet and reconsider the decision they made with respect to the people of the southwest part of the province, and we are prepared to have those discussions with them.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, perhaps the Minister is as selective in the kind of memory she has on programs that have been put out as she was in regard to not being able to remember the conversation that she and I had in Ottawa last

fall, where she indicated that we would use a portion of the \$300-million funds to target the disaster in southwest Manitoba—just had to get the funds first.

My question that I just asked her was: What has her NDP Government done, what kind of dollars and programs have they put forth on their own initiative? Not the ones that she has just named, which were put in by the previous government and committed to by the previous government, whether it was the enhancement of the crop insurance or the seeded acreage, the wet acreage in that program. The \$40 million was certainly her commitment to the farmers of Manitoba, and I have been on record as saying that that was very much needed. We thank any negotiations for the \$100 million that came, \$60 million from the feds and \$40 million from the province, but those are generally available to all farmers in the province of Manitoba, and I am on record as saying they were needed. They are only a portion of what was needed.

But my question was: What targeted funds has her government put forward to meet the disaster in southwest Manitoba? Clearly, so far, Mr. Chairman, I have not received an answer and I assume that that is because there has been none.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Arthur-Virden still has the floor.

Mr. Maguire: I guess my question would be: Is that the case, that there are no funds?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, if you look at the changes that have been made, the money that I outlined, the changes that have been made to AIDA, such as Olympic averaging, that change certainly helped the people of the southwest part of the province. I have had many meetings with people of the southwest part of the province who have indicated that that is a good change and it has helped them.

There are other changes that they have talked about that have not been implemented, but certainly the change to the Olympic average has been beneficial to them, as have the other programs that I have outlined in here that we have implemented since we formed government.

Those are taxpayers' dollars that are going to support the farm community, just as the \$70 million was put in place from taxpayers' money to help. Yes, put in by the previous government, but it comes from the general revenues of this province. The programs that we have enhanced, there are certainly supports from general revenue that I think are worthy investments because I think agriculture is a very important industry.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I am very well aware, Mr. Chairman and Madam Minister, that these funds have come from the previous government and that your government, and thankfully, has gone ahead and implemented those. A lot of those dollars were paid out last August, prior to the election as well. The farmers received those dollars, and they were thankful for them and have been expressing that to both you and I many times and to others.

* (16:50)

My question was: What new funds have we been able to secure for these farmers to meet their needs? Two groups came forward this winter, two independent groups of farmers, one being the southwest rally group where they were indicating that they needed \$85 million in support. They went to Ottawa, and I had the opportunity to go with them, seeking that, as well as the group from Minnedosa, who independently came through a series that would have indicated that there would be a \$2-billion shortfall in agriculture in all of Manitoba because of last year's flooding and that, even once they took off the kinds of dollars that might have been a commitment in AIDA and NISA and disaster payments and other programs that were available to them that there would still be a \$90-million shortfall in that region. These groups are very close in their analysis. I am wondering: Does the Minister not acknowledge that there would be a magnitude of in the \$85-90-million requirement needed to come anywhere close to meeting the needs of this region?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member is outlining all of the difficulties facing the farming community. That is exactly why we went to Ottawa. That is why we wanted, as government, to take an all-party delegation to Ottawa,

something the previous government did not do, Mr. Chairman, but something that we thought was very important, right after we were elected, to pull together all parties, farm groups, business groups, chambers of commerce, AMM, pull everybody together to take a delegation to Ottawa to get them to recognize what an important challenge we were facing in rural Manitoba and rural Saskatchewan, asking the Federal Government to recognize that there was a very serious situation as a result of largely because the Federal Government had chosen to pull their support out of the farming community.

One of the major issues was the elimination of the Crow, a move supported by some producers who thought this was going to be better for Manitobans if we eliminated the Crow. We have seen that it has been a very difficult challenge for producers so we joined together to go to the federal government to try to get \$300 million for our producers.

At the same time we said that there was another issue, and that was the whole issue of the crisis in the southwest part of the province. Certainly I recognize it as a very serious situation. We said that we would go to Ottawa, raise that issue in Ottawa, to get the federal government to recognize that the situation facing the people in the southwest part of the province was no different than the situation faced by people in the Red River Valley, no different than the situation faced by people in the Saguenay when they had their flood or when we had the ice storm in eastern Canada. Those are all natural disasters, as was the flooding of the southwest part of the province. Given that it was considered a disaster area, we thought that it was very important that the Federal Government also consider the lost input costs. We outlined to the federal government a way that they could, we felt, a section of the act where they could cover up these costs. The federal government has, through all of our negotiations, even though ministers from the federal government have indicated that there was going to be support and built up the hopes for the people of the southwest part of the province, they chose to not address the issue.

I have met with people from the southwest part of the province. I am going to be meeting

with them again, in the near future. The Premier is raising the issue with the Prime Minister today. We recognize that this is an unfair treatment of Manitobans. But there are a lot of areas where Manitoba farmers are treated unfairly, in particular the difficulty that they face because of the loss of the Crow in comparison to other areas. With respect to the flooding, we have raised this, we have raised every option, we have told the federal government, members of the federal Cabinet that we are prepared to take part in any program that they will put forward. Unfortunately the Cabinet of the Federal Government has turned this proposal down. I hope that our Premier can raise it with the Prime Minister again and maybe get some change of heart there.

Mr. Maguire: Simply, Mr. Chairman, does the Minister think that she will get some disaster funding from the federal government?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I recognize the seriousness of the situation. I am always hopeful that we could get, I sincerely want to negotiate something there. Given the comments by the ministers that we met with, I did not leave Ottawa with much hope, but certainly there is always a hope that someone will change their mind, and I hope that the Prime Minister will.

Mr. Maguire: I would certainly concur, on behalf of those farmers, that we keep our optimism open that we would get some funding for that particular region. Would the Minister be able to tell me how many dollars they have received from Ottawa in transfer payments since coming to power as a government?

Ms. Wowchuk: I think that the Member would ask that question of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Mr. Maguire: Would I be able to get that information from the Minister, if she was to ask him and return it at some other time then? If she could just provide me with that information during Estimates?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated to the Member, that is a question for the Minister of Finance, and I would encourage the Member to have that discussion with the Minister of

Finance. He could provide him with that information.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, I will ask another question then. I guess we have received a \$100-million package, and the Minister continues to refer to that. Can she indicate to me whether or not she had an opportunity to target some of those \$100 million of funds, some portion of that \$100 million to farmers in southwest Manitoba or disaster stricken farmers?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Mr. Chairman, we did not have that opportunity.

Mr. Maguire: Was that opportunity negated because of the federal government putting strings on it that allowed the Minister not to use those funds for disaster purposes, or could she not have had the opportunity to use \$20 million of that for that area, as a number, it might have been \$3 million, and then use the rest of it for the kind of program that she did, generally available for all of the province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the federal government tied the money, said that the money had to be spent for the transportation costs related to the loss of the Crow and to the Canadian Wheat Board pooling. Those were the parameters that it was set out in. That is why there was no money for eastern Canada. There was a small amount of money that could have gone to Alberta, but they said that the amount was too small, and they chose not to participate in the program, because they in fact started their own program. But it was targeted to the loss of transportation support. That is why the money is paid out on grain that has been marketed, not to grain that is fed on-farm, because it deals strictly with transportation and pooling costs. Those guidelines were spelled out by the federal government.

* (17:00)

Mr. Maguire: Can the Minister, and it would come from the negotiations that she was part of, indicate to me, with that \$100-million program then that has come forward, whether or not the CMAP payment will be clawed back in future payments under AIDA if a new safety net is agreed upon along the lines of AIDA and that in

a subsequent year, being the year 2000, any funds that farmers have received under CMAP today will not be clawed back under a new agreement, that is, if a farmer was to be eligible for an AIDA-style payment in the future?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the money from CMAP is income to the farmer, and it will have to be reported as income.

Mr. Maguire: Is that income, obviously for income tax purposes, but also for income against AIDA the same as the \$50-dollar payment a year ago?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Maguire: Therefore any CMAP payment that is paid out now, the \$7,000 plus the final that the farmers will get after there is a determination on how many claims come forward, could in fact in subsequent years get clawed back.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman, because otherwise the farmer would be able to claim twice for a declining income, and I am not sure that that is how we would be wanting to spend taxpayers' dollars. It will be treated the same way as the MFDAP money was and the CMAP money. The farmer will have to declare those as income when he is filling out his forms for programs in the future.

Mr. Maguire: I am clear on that, Mr. Chairman. The Minister has just indicated that these funds could be clawed back in future payments, that they would receive a smaller future AIDA payment because of already having received some of the CMAP program, and therefore it becomes—if you do not qualify for AIDA, you get to keep it. If you do qualify for AIDA in the future, then you qualify for that much less because you will have already received—it acts like a cash advance, just as the \$50 an acre did last year.

I guess I only asked this question because very clearly I feel that that is a let down in negotiations as we use these programs to try and say, well, we are going to target the disaster area and then they wake up and find out subsequently down the road that they are not eligible for

future payments. This is a big part of why southwest Manitoba and in fact all the farmers in Manitoba that were faced with a disaster in '99 are so leery about the kinds of discussions and negotiations that are going on between the provincial government at the present time and the federal government and why they are so very, very reluctant to try to, I guess, take the Government at its word when it says we are trying to develop some kind of payment mechanism and we are fighting on your behalf to get dollars in southwest Manitoba.

I do not think what we have just discussed is very well known, if it is known at all, in the rural areas of Manitoba. To say that, as the federal government and the provincial government did when they came out with this wonderful program for \$100 million, I mean it is not targetting that particular region. It is actually taking funds that might have otherwise gone into that hard-hit area and spreading them around the whole province. This kind of thing even does it further into the year 2000-2001. I think that is why we are seeing the scepticism in the rural communities and all the rural communities and the rural farming area of Manitoba today. Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that the farm groups, whether it was the Keystone Ag Producers, farmers who supported and still do support a disaster payment to be paid in southwest Manitoba just like the southwest farmers supported those in the Red River Valley in 1997 are ongoing, in fact, just like the farmers in all of Manitoba supported the Minister's own farmers in her valley in Swan Valley in 1988. There is an ongoing co-operation amongst the farm community in Manitoba today, but they do not like being duped by the kinds of programs that say we are here to support you on one hand and the next minute when they go to apply for aid and funding in another program, they have it basically taken away from them by the kinds of programs that are being negotiated by our two levels of government today.

This is not the way to rebuild the economy of an area that has been hit by a disaster, and so that is why I am so adamant about continuing the line of questioning that we are on here today. This is so important to the economic viability of that region, but, Mr. Chairman, any time you can get matched dollars from the federal government

to come into the economy of Manitoba, I believe it would be a very sound step forward to negotiate those. I know that the finances of this province are under pressure, and there are limited amounts of taxpayer dollars to spend. We also know that more could have been done in this whole area, and so I would ask the Minister if, having said that we are not happy with the fact that we were not able to get \$85 million or \$90 million from the federal government in cost-sharing even with the province, I guess I would say we could put closure to this whole process or some closure to it at least if we were able to receive the \$43 million that our own government has indicated would be required to meet some of the lost farm inputs from the '99 disaster.

So can the Minister indicate to me that she is still continuing to lobby and fight for the \$43 million that is required for the disaster of 1999?

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Member has not finished yet.

Mr. Maguire: Or more if the Minister is successful in negotiating that.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Premier is in those negotiations today with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I know that the Minister knows that I had conversations with the Premier before he went to those negotiations today, and I certainly commend him for raising it along with the issue of Shilo and a number of other areas that are important to southwest Manitoba and to all Manitoba citizens, but the situation that we are faced with, I guess, I am saying: Is the Minister comfortable with the fact that \$43 million would go a long way towards solving the problem in southwest Manitoba today?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have said many times to the Member that I recognize that it is a very serious situation in the southwest part of the province. We have written letters on this matter, we have had telephone conversations on this matter, we were in Ottawa talking about trying to get support for the southwest part of the province. We as a government would not be making all of those efforts if we did not think the

situation was serious, and I know that the Premier would not be raising it with the Prime Minister if he did not think it was serious, and we will continue to work on it.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I believe I am not asking, trying to get some devious number on the record here, Mr. Chairman. The Minister has made it public before, I believe, that they are negotiating for \$43 million, or were, to try and find that much aid at least I would say for southwest Manitoba. All I am asking her today is can she confirm that?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, what we are negotiating for is to ensure that the people of the southwest part of the province are treated fairly and equally to the way the people in the Red River Valley were treated, to ensure that they are our farmers, our producers get the same kind of treatment as the people in the Saguenay received, the people in the ice storm and that is recognition that they suffered a disaster and that their costs should be covered, and in this particular case, we are looking to ensure that the costs such as applied fertilizers and land restorations which were raised by the producers, that those costs will be covered.

* (17:10)

Mr. Maguire: I guess what I would say is can the Minister table the process that they went through to determine how the \$43 million was determined?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I think the important issue is to get the federal government to recognize that there has been a disaster, and that the people of the southwest part of the province, and I might add in other parts of the province, not only in the southwest part of the province, because in fact there were some people in my part of the province whose areas were declared a disaster and qualified under the MFDAP program in the Roblin area, in the Russell area, Neepawa, Minnedosa. There was a wide area of the province where about a million acres went unseeded, where there was fertilizer applied, where there had been lost input costs, land has to be restored, many issues that have to be addressed.

The important thing is to get the federal government to agree that these costs should be covered, and from there, we work out the agreement. We would not have very much difficulty at all in trying to work out a formula on how the funds should be paid out or the amount of money that would be needed. The most important issue is to get the federal government to recognize this is a disaster, and then we could start working on the formula.

The amount of dollars, whether it is \$20 million or \$40 million that you come to an agreement on, will work itself out. Because, in many disasters, you cannot say this is a fixed amount. Once it is recognized as a disaster, then you go through the process, and each individual makes their application. That is when you determine the amount of money that you need. So it is very difficult to say how much money you need now. The important thing is working out an agreement that there is going to be a program to help producers with their lost input costs, and I certainly hope that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has success this afternoon.

Mr. Maguire: Can the Minister confirm that there would only be then support for the farmers in that region? I mean, many times the business people of those communities have told me that if we can get enough dollars out of the hands of the farmers, it will trail through our businesses and it will help the whole economy and help keep them buoyant as well. Can she indicate that the funds that they are seeking are for direct support then for farmers, and not for the business people in the communities?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have been negotiating to get the federal government to recognize that this is a disaster and that the lost input costs should be addressed, as should land restoration, because I very firmly believe that if those dollars would come into the rural communities, into the farmers' hands, they will very quickly flow into the business community, and the dollars will be spent. But those are the issues that I have been negotiating on.

Mr. Maguire: Can the Minister concur then that they are still negotiating along the same lines of the disaster program that she was looking at when she was talking about \$43 million publicly

for Agriculture before, whereby there would be a certain amount of dollars on a per acre basis used for that region, as well as, the lost farm inputs that are required to meet the needs of the farmers in that region?

Mr. Chairperson: Sometimes it is not wise for us human beings to get ahead of real world events as they unfold before our eyes. Let us wait for the outcome to talk between the Premier of Manitoba and the Prime Minister of Canada. Let us wait for a while and see how the cookie crumbles. The Honourable Minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your advice. I want to say to the Member that what we are looking for, what we are talking about to the federal government is a package. We are looking for assistance, for the federal government to recognize that the farmers of southwestern Manitoba have suffered serious losses because of their lost input costs. Certainly there is the need for land restoration, and that is the package that we have been talking to the federal government about.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your words of philosophy in regard to the process that the farmers of southwest Manitoba are undergoing, but for many of them I would say that the cookie has crumbled. It has not only crumbled, it has been driven over.

Can the Minister concur then that the kinds of negotiations that we are talking about today are that she is still negotiating with her government on behalf of the farmers of that region? That the funds would be paid out, as well, in not an unidentical manner to that of the Red River Valley of '97 but also including some of the farm inputs that were required to maintain the land throughout '99 in a state to get it ready to seed for the year 2000? That being a lot of chemical that was required, some of it, you know, including the airplane costs and floater costs and getting it applied to that land which were over and above normal requirements just to maintain it, which was not required in the Red River Valley as you are aware because the water did recede and the crop, by and large, was able to be seeded in that region? Can she concur with that today?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, what we have to do is get the federal government to recognize that there were serious losses in the southwest part of the province, that there were many input costs that the farmers put in, that there is land that has to be restored because of the flooding. If we get the federal government to recognize that, then we work on the details of the program.

Mr. Maguire: I guess, I go back to my earlier skepticism as to the comments that I had in Ottawa in October. Sounds awfully familiar to the discussion we have had earlier today, where I am supposed to believe that "trust us, we have got to get the money first, and then we will determine what we are going to pay out." The farmers in southwest Manitoba are very sceptical that if there is an agreement worked out between this provincial government and the federal government that the funds will not get disbursed across the whole region again and end up with no funds once again being targeted to the southwest region of this province. Can the Minister tell me that if there is an agreement between her government, her Premier today and the Prime Minister of Canada, that these funds will be used to target the disaster in southwest Manitoba? I will leave it at that for now, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: You have got your answer, Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden. Shall we pass this item?

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, you know, in the past we have looked at this whole process. When we looked at the hundred million dollars that we had spread out across the whole province, many of the farmers out there felt that the Minister had her priorities very much reversed. As I have said many times, these funds were needed for low commodity prices across Manitoba and indeed all the Prairie provinces in Canada because of these excessive subsidies in European and U.S. nations. If you had an opportunity to negotiate, there was a feeling out there, and I want to tell the Minister that the feeling out there was that these people were left out to dry, as I have said many times, because first of all, we were negotiating for the low commodity prices instead

of putting your priority first to deal with the disaster.

* (17:20)

When you have an illness in the family, very clearly, it is fine to say that, oh, well, someone else should take care of this person, and we really need a lot of help to look after a particular individual in our families. But if they do not come forward, the bottom line is you dig into whatever resources you can find as an individual and you help that family member. You help your neighbour, you help citizens in your region, and you continue to expand that, I guess, wherever we can in our giving as according to each individual's ability right across the world as Manitobans have given to other causes in many areas, Mr. Chairman.

So I want to draw the Minister's attention here that the farmers of southwest Manitoba certainly appreciate any work that was done on the CMAP program, but there is a great feeling out there of distrust when you look at the fact of the situation that they feel, that this whole process of farm rallies last fall may not have arisen in the first place if there had not been a disaster in southwest Manitoba. They feel that because of their energies and their efforts, not only here but I can tell you from the calls I have had from farmers in southeastern Saskatchewan as well, there is a feeling that the governments have their priorities reversed here in regard to the kinds of mechanisms that have been used to develop dollars to put into this region, particularly when now we find out that if some of these dollars are coming out into these farmers' hands that they would be clawed back if they are in a similar situation in the year 2000-2001.

This is a very untenable situation. One that I am sure the Minister is going to deal with the ramifications of a great despair down the road. These farmers are not aware of the situation to date and when they become more aware of it, I am sure that there is going to be a great deal of consternation on their behalf, and I would expect that the Minister would get many calls in regard to this issue. This is just poor negotiation on behalf of two levels of government, and she is

the one that is responsible in the kinds of safety net negotiations that have been going on.

Once again, I ask the Minister if, in fact, her government in these negotiations with the federal government today is willing to put new dollars on the table in any kind of a formula if the federal government asks them to so that these farmers are not continuing to be left out on their own for survival of the fittest because of a disaster that they had no means of controlling.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Chairman, I will go back to where we started out two and a half hours ago. Two and half hours ago, I said that we went to Ottawa looking for two distinct things. We went to Ottawa to ask them to recognize that the people of western Canada were suffering seriously because of changes in federal policy. The elimination of the Crow— which many people supported, it was suppose to be a big help to the producers of Manitoba— ended up being a disaster and driving the price of farmers' input costs up causing a serious problem for farmers. Grain prices fell, supports for—

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Point of order being raised, state your point of order, please.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, we have been through this on Thursday, the last day of sitting, and the Minister agreed with me that we would have all been better off if we got \$7.8 billion paid out in the Crow benefit and there is no discussion on that. There is certainly no dispute on that fact. There is no doubt about that at all and, yes, it has put farmers in Manitoba at a very large disadvantage because those dollars were not paid out. If it had been paid out, we would have received perhaps the largest proportion of those funds.

Mr. Chairperson: Substantive issues are not points of order.

An Honourable Member: Substantive issues can be points of order.

Mr. Chairperson: When I say substantive issues, I mean a dispute over the facts, and they are not points of order.

An Honourable Member: On a new point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: A new point of order. Please state your point of order.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe there was any dispute of facts in regard to the \$7 billion being—the Prairies would have been better off if that money had not been paid out. The Minister and I agree on that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the Minister agree that there is no dispute over the facts?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would like to proceed with my answer.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: At the beginning I was outlining to the Member, as I did two and a half hours ago, and on Thursday, what transpired when we went to Ottawa. We went to Ottawa with two distinct issues. One was the income shortfall that farmers were facing in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as a result, in change of policies by the federal government, the elimination of the Crow, and reduction of support to agriculture, this happening at the same time as the Europeans and the Americans continued to raise their support for farmers, and causing our farmers to have to compete with international treasuries. So we went to Ottawa trying to get support for our farmers. In fact, we went for \$300 million for Manitoba farmers. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, we went to Ottawa to try to get assistance for the people of the southwestern part of the province for the difficult situation that they were facing.

But I have to remind the Member that the flood in the southwest part of the province did not occur in October of '99. The flood in the southwest part of the province occurred in the spring of '99. In fact, many farmers in that part of the province are telling us that it was a failure

of his government, the previous government's part, that they did not begin this negotiation on this disaster with the federal government much, much earlier. These negotiations could have begun in June, in July, when the previous government was in power.

I remember talking in this House, and talking about all parties getting together and working to talk about the disaster and how we could get the federal government to recognize it as a disaster. Maybe if there would have been some leadership on the part of the previous government to start thinking about pulling all parties together and putting pressure on the federal government right then, instead of having to wait until we form government and take the leadership role in it, we might have had some success earlier. As the Member is from that part of the province, I do not know why he waited that long to have this whole issue dealt with. We did not have to wait to see whether the crops were coming off, or they were not coming off, because we know that there were people who put their inputs in the fall of the previous year, and some had put them in in the spring. That money was spent. I am not quite sure where the Member was, and why there was not a bunch rallying to push the federal government then. Those costs were out; those disasters were there right then; and they should have been addressed.

I want to indicate again to the Member, as I did on Thursday, and as I did a couple of hours ago today, we went to Ottawa on two distinct issues. We got some support under the CMAP program. Not as much as we wanted, but \$100 million is better than no dollars in Manitoba. I think that that \$100 million alone, the Member would have liked it to be targeted to the southwest part of the province. Farmers from the southwest part of the province also tell us that that money was very helpful for them and very timely, that it came at a time when they had to be putting their crops into the ground.

* (17:30)

With respect to the disaster, again, I think that the previous government had some responsibility in this matter, in trying to get the federal government to recognize that this was an

issue, and should have been working on it long before we came into office. Since coming into office, we have worked on it, and we continue to call on the federal government to recognize that the costs that the farmers have put in, those input costs that they put in, whether it was in the fall, the previous fall or in the spring, the loss of forage, the need to restore the land, are all important issues and should be covered by the federal government. I hope that the Premier will be successful in raising the issue with the Prime Minister today.

I want to also mention, the Member talks about mistrust. Quite frankly, I am quite surprised at that because I have had quite good relationships with the people in the southwest and continue to have meetings with them. Nobody there has given any indication that they do not trust us in these negotiations. They continue to encourage us to work on these negotiations. No one has said that they do not trust us to make a good deal on this.

The Member talks about, if we get a deal, will the money go to the southwest part of the province. Well, that is what the discussion is about. That is where the disaster is. Where does he think the money will go if we negotiate something for the southwestern part of the province? Of course it is going to go to the southwest part of the province. What we have to do is stand together and try to convince the federal government that they have some responsibility in this.

The other issue that the Member raises is the clawback, that he is so shocked about this. I am surprised that the Member would be so shocked about the fact that federal dollars would have to be reported as income. As long as I can remember, when there are support payments given to farmers, they are always considered as income. This should come as no surprise to the Member. In fact, it was his government that negotiated that part of the MFDAP program would be credited to AIDA. The fact that they have to be declared as income, I am not quite sure how the Member would suggest that government money should flow and should not be recognized as income. I do not think so, Mr. Chairman.

Certainly, there are two distinct issues here. We have got some money from the federal government with respect to the low commodity prices and the high input costs. I know that our farmers feel that they are treated very unfairly by our federal government when they look at the supports that the U.S. farmers get.

The Member talks about being let down by the Province. I am afraid that the producers were let down by the previous government when they did not continue these negotiations with the federal government, where they could have got this. Maybe if they would have done it a little sooner, we might have been able to get the federal government out. By the time we took office, the flood was all over. Had they been able to, as government, get the federal government out to the southwest part of the province when the situation was as serious as it was, the federal government might have seen the real situation out there. But the previous government dragged their feet on this whole issue; did not call on the federal government to recognize it as a disaster.

I know that they did invite the Premier. I believe the people from the southwest invited the Prime Minister to come out. He did not come out, unfortunately. Those kinds of negotiations could have happened earlier on.

We recognize it as a disaster. Certainly if money comes from the federal government for this disaster, it will go to the southwest part of the province as is outlined. It will go to the southwest and I hope we can get some resolution to this.

Mr. Maguire: It is just such answers, Mr. Chairman, which lead the people of southwest Manitoba to be so skeptical about this Minister and her government. She has just finished indicating to me that this government should have done more. I was one of the farmers out there lobbying the government at that time to make moves in southwest Manitoba, seeking the nomination to be a part of this party's government.

The Minister has indicated that we should have done more in June and July to get something on the table, on the record, for this. I do not know, I am assuming—I was not part of

this House at that time, but the Minister who was in opposition, the critic in Agriculture at that time, had already given her all-party unanimous support to a package of dollars that were agreed upon in the Legislature of Manitoba to be paid out to the farmers of southwest Manitoba. That occurred in June. The rural recovery coalition was put together in the latter part of May when it became apparent that there was a disaster required. They met several times, a couple of times at least, with the government of the day. The government of the day kept the Opposition at that time very much informed as to what was being needed in that particular region of the world. Her own leader came to a disaster meeting in the rink in Melita that was probably unprecedented in anything I have ever seen. I ask: what more can the Minister ask? The agreement was announced at the end of June. The dollars were beginning to be paid on the 12th of August.

She is saying more could have been done. There was \$71 million, as I have reiterated here, on the table and for all-party unanimity to be put there. *[interjection]* Since this Minister came in, she has not been able to put on record today after three hours of questioning any new dollars that her government has been able to put forward for the disaster in southwest Manitoba that are not generally available to every other farmer in Manitoba—*[interjection]*

I repeat, as I have said earlier, that is because there is no new plan. There has not been a plan and this is why farmers are skeptical about her government's negotiations with the federal government on this issue. As I have used the family analogy, when someone is sick in your own family you do what you have to do and try to rebuild your equity later on.

We have a situation here in this province where there is a fiscal stabilization account with dollars in it that could be used for this action, though our own Finance Minister has indicated that dollars should be used for disasters from the fiscal stabilization package.

Why will this government in the negotiations not use dollars from that program to try to improve the economy of this region that

was so much devastated by means beyond their own control? Can she answer that?

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member is saying why are we not using the dollars from—

An Honourable Member: The Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Ms. Wowchuk: —Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I told the Member that we have not had negotiations with the federal government. We have offered to participate in any kind of program that they would agree to, and we have looked at various options with them—*[interjection]* They have chosen not to recognize these input costs as a disaster and are not prepared to put money on the table. The federal government would agree to a program, we would have the dollars on the table, and I have told the Members this many times.

They know that. They choose to play games with this particular issue and talk about lack of support from this government for the agricultural community. Quite frankly, that is misleading because we recognize the importance of the agricultural industry and have made changes to programs since we have taken office which the agricultural community recognizes as good changes. We will continue to work on the whole issue of the disaster of the southwestern part of the province.

But I would remind the Member that the federal representatives that we have met with told us that they have taken this issue to the federal Cabinet three times. The federal Cabinet has said they do not recognize these input costs as a disaster. They will not consider funding it under DFAA, and they do not think that this warrants a special kind of disaster assistance program whether it be a 50-50 share or a 90-10 or anything else.

What they tell us is that this situation is different because during the Red River flood there were no programs like AIDA that there are now, and they think that that is the support program for the farming community. I disagree with them. My government disagrees with them. We think that there should be support and that the federal government should recognize it as a

disaster. We have had this discussion with the Member on Thursday, outlining the whole issue of how we raise this matter with the federal government. I outlined it for him earlier today. For the Member to say that the people of southwest Manitoba do not trust this government in these negotiations, he must be out there planting those seeds because that is certainly not the comments that I have heard from the producers there. The producers there have continued to ask us to try to get the federal government to support them in this one, Mr. Chairman. The producers have put various programs forward. There was a group of producers that put the suggestion forward that there be a \$20-an-acre payment, I believe. There have been various suggestions of how this disaster should be supported.

But, Mr. Chair, for the Member to say that there has been no money on the table or that this government is not prepared to put money into the program is not factual, because we have said we are prepared to put money into it.

* (17:40)

We went to the federal government. My colleague the Minister for Government Services (Mr. Ashton) and I went to Ottawa with our staff to negotiate that kind of a settlement for the people of the southwest part of the province. But, when we got there, as I have indicated several times now, the Member from—*[interjection]* Mr. Chairman, if you would not mind calling the Member from Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) to order. He continues to jabber from his chair, and it is very difficult to respond to a question from the Member from Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Mr. Chairperson: The Chairman sometimes exercises discretion on the matter. Sometimes I call him, sometimes not. Shall I call the Member? He does not have the floor. The Member for Arthur-Virden.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, if I could complete my answer then, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. The Honourable Minister has not finished.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, I have not finished, Mr. Chairman, because I want to tell the Member that this is a very important issue, and one that I take very seriously. I really feel for those people in the southwest part of the province who have been through great difficulty, and who have lost a year's income. There are not many people who can lose a year's income and continue to operate.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Emerson wants to answer. Could he please wait? The Honourable Minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Farmers are really a tough bunch of people and can ride out many storms. We have had it within our own family where, because of crop failures and difficulties, my husband has had to go to work over the winter months. So I have lived through that experience where it is very difficult for farmers to make a living.

I really feel sorry for the people of southwestern Manitoba. I am hoping, and they have been able to get a crop in this year, that they will have a successful year. I hope that the work we do through this department, through the Farm Business Management and developing new programs, and help with the diversification, and move into new crops and into livestock will indeed help the producers of southwestern Manitoba. But I know that this year is going to be a very difficult year because they are still carrying an awful lot of debt from last year. Hopefully, we will have a good crop. Hopefully, those people will be able to make it through this year, and then get on their feet. There is no doubt that there are some real challenges. I have talked to the producers who have had to let their land go, and they are renting it to another producer for very low rates.

Mr. Jack Penner: The Minister has crassly refused to recognize—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Is the Honourable Minister finished yet?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, those are all real challenges that we face, that the people of southwestern Manitoba—and again I want to say that it is not only in southwestern Manitoba because there is an area in the Roblin, Gilbert

Plains, Grandview area where they have had three very difficult years now, where they have had excess moisture, have not been able to get their crop off, sometimes difficulty in seeding, difficulty getting the crop off. There is a part of my own constituency that had difficulty last year, but hopefully this year we will have a better year. Hopefully, we can convince the federal government that this is indeed a disaster and there should be assistance to help with those lost costs, with the input cost that the producers had and work forward from there. I know that it is a very great challenge that the people of the southwest part of the province are facing, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Chairman, that is exactly how the people of southwest Manitoba feel, neglected. They are saying, hopefully, this government has not forgotten us. They are saying, hopefully, there will be some kind of negotiation. Hopefully, they will come to their senses and put some new dollars on the table so we can have something for the federal government to match in southwest Manitoba to put a program forward. That is why I asked the questions about \$43 million today. Those were the numbers that the Minister had talked about earlier this spring. The federal government is not going to come to the table without some kind of commitment in that area. They are skeptical because of what she has just said, you know, in regard to trust.

I asked the Minister: Has she been to southwest Manitoba, anything beyond Brandon, since she came into power? That would be one question. Mr. Chairman, she has also, and I am glad she brought it up, referred to meetings that she has had with those farmers. Can she provide us with a list of them and where those meetings were?

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I guess my question was in reply to the Minister's previous question: What meetings has she had in southwest Manitoba beyond Brandon and where have they been held? Can she provide us with a list of those?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have met with several groups, and I have visited people outside of Brandon.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management. Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I only asked because I am sure that this was relevant to the salaries of the farmers of southwest Manitoba. There is no doubt that these are the questions they are asking. If the Minister has been out in my constituency, can she indicate to me where she held those meetings outside of Brandon—either Arthur-Virden, Turtle Mountain or Minnedosa riding, perhaps even Russell riding in regard to the Member from that area's concern? It also falls into the Member from Ste. Rose, we cover those areas, and even in our fellow critic from the riding of Emerson. There were farmers struck by disaster in all of these constituencies. Can she indicate to us where in southwest Manitoba she held meetings with farmers? where has she been? Can she not provide us with a list of those meetings?

Mr. Chairperson: This is getting unruly now. Too many people talking at the same time.

Mr. Maguire: I will clarify my question, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister provide me with a list of names of town that she has been in, never mind the people she met with, as she says she has met with many. There must at least be a community or a place that she did meet. Can she provide me with a list of the communities that she has been in, outside of Brandon and southwest Manitoba, since she came into power where she actually talked to farmers about the disaster, other than the trip, if she did go to the Peace Gardens with the Premier to look at, just recently, the Governor's discussions in the State of North Dakota and Idaho and Minnesota?

Ms. Wowchuk: I will look to gather that information to the Member and provide it for him.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4(a) Marketing and Farm Business Management \$1,785,700. Shall the item pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, perhaps as well the Minister and I have some of this, but I do not have it all. I just wonder if the Minister could table any correspondence that she might have had with her counterparts in Ottawa as well in Agriculture, Defence, or Mr. Eggleton's department with the disaster, him being part of Emergency Preparedness Canada. There have been no doubt negotiations going on there throughout the winter and spring. In all of these discussion, perhaps with Mr. Axworthy as well, could she supply this House and myself with a list of the correspondence that she has had with those ministers since the beginning of October?

* (17:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: There has been a variety of ways of communication. As I indicated, we had meetings with my counterparts; we had meetings with various ministers regarding this matter; there have been phone calls; and certainly there have been written communication. I will check on those communications as to whether or not they can be tabled.

Mr. Maguire: I assume then that, if they are available, the Minister will table them then.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would check on that. If they are joint letters, then we have to check with the other people who signed the letter to get approval, but certainly I would be prepared to provide the Member with that correspondence.

Mr. Maguire: I hope the Minister can sense the frustration of the people of southwest Manitoba through the questions that I have been asking today, and I have been trying to deal with it in a straightforward manner as I can. I am the one that has to continue to travel that region, and I can assure her that there is a great deal of scepticism amongst the farmers in that region in regard to the government's sincerity here in Manitoba today about dealing with their issue.

It may have something to do with this government not understanding the severity of the situation. If this was a case where we could sit

back and wait and try to negotiate and work our way through this, then I perhaps would take the same path as she has done, but this is a matter of paramount concern. There are people going broke; there are people having to leave their farms; there are businesses that are closing their doors. There are new businesses, as I have said, if you are able to have had the wherewithal and the number of years behind you to build new businesses and get on with the process of being able to get through one more year, that are going to continue to develop. As I have been on record, there are many new fence lines being developed in our area, but that is not to say that there are not many people still going into a very serious situation of having to leave their farms or recapitalize them if they are able to at all.

Therefore, will the Minister indicate to me if she truly wants all party unanimity on this—and I might indicate that I would be there. Will she indicate to this House that if there is a \$43-million program that her Premier is asking the federal government for today, if in fact she is prepared to challenge her counterparts in government, and does she have enough clout in her own Cabinet to get the okay to put \$21.5 million on the table to meet the needs of this region in matched funding by the federal government?

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to again recognize the plight of the people of the southwestern part of the province and how serious it is. I have said that time and again. I also want to put on the record again, as I have said many times, that disasters are the responsibility of the federal government. Just as when there was a disaster in the ice storm, when there was the rainstorm with the flood in the Saguenay, the federal government was the one that came on, just as they did in the Red River Valley. The federal government came with their dollars very quickly and then negotiated with the provincial government. We have said that we are not going to backfill for the federal government. The province has put in, under the previous administration, supports for the southwest part of the province. There is need for the federal government to come forward.

I can assure the Member that we would not have gone to Ottawa to negotiate if we did not

have our money on the table. So I can assure him that my colleagues are in support of this issue. Surely the Member would not think that we were going to go to Ottawa and then come home and say, oh, by the way, we are not putting any money into this. He knows that that is not the way things are done.

At least I would hope that he would realize that for two ministers to go to Ottawa to negotiate on a safety net program, we have to have the support of our colleagues. To have our Premier indicate in the House that he is going to raise the issue again with the Prime Minister gives you an indication that there is a support from this government for the people of southwestern Manitoba. That has been the case, and it continues to be the case, and I look for support from the Member opposite. I still want to say that I think that it would have been very helpful if we would have been able to get all-party support on our resolution so that we could then go to Ottawa and indicate, yes, we have support of all members of government here.

We think that we have to have either under disaster assistance or under the Canada-Manitoba agreement, somehow we have to have support for the people of Ottawa. For the Member to suggest that, have you got the support of Cabinet, I again say to him I do not think that we would have been going to Ottawa to negotiate if we did not have the support of my colleagues.

I want to tell the Member that the members of my caucus and of our Cabinet recognize very

well the importance that agriculture plays in the rural community. They feel the impact of a million acres of production not being in the income of this province. It makes a big difference. We recognize the importance of that. I hope that our Premier is successful in his negotiations and that we can again reopen the discussions and have members of the federal Cabinet reconsider their decision. Hopefully, we will get this issue moved forward and have the lost input costs as weeds and fertilizer and forage restoration addressed by the federal government.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I would like to indicate to the Minister that tomorrow we will be debating 3.4 for Agricultural Development and Marketing, if you want to indicate to staff that those are the lines that we will be indicating tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: This is already before the Committee. That is the line we are on.

Mr. Jack Penner: That is the one that we will be debating tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., the Committee rise.

Please call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 12, 2000

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