



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

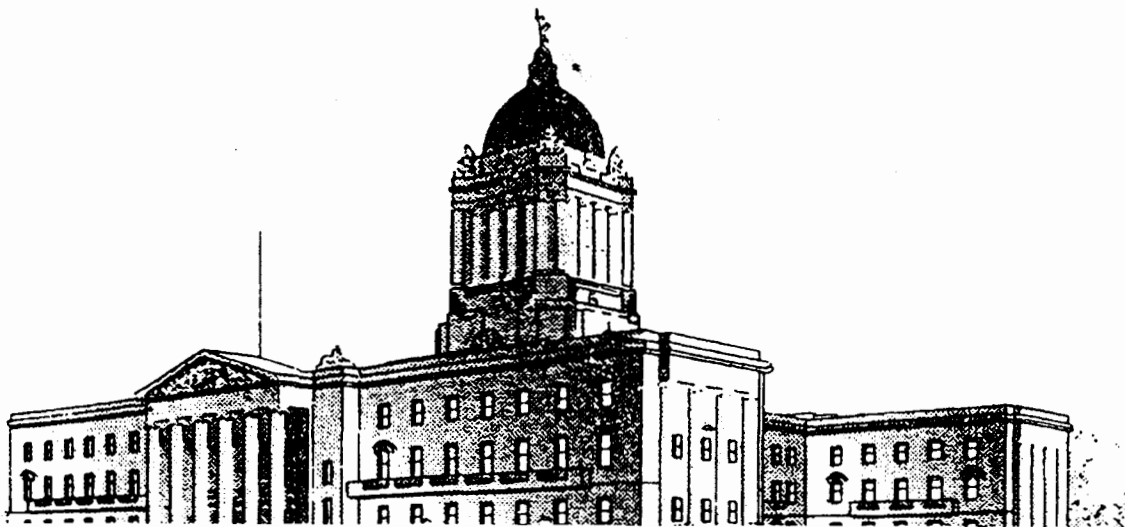
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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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.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 25, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of David Howes, Kim Howes, Mary Kuzyk and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide the matter.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I have reviewed the petition and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth

THAT on November 8, 2001, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) announced a split in the Transcona-Springfield School Division but despite repeated requests has been unable to identify any benefits of this decision to the students and taxpayers of said school division; and

THAT this decision was not preceded by adequate public consultation as outlined in section 7 of The Public Schools Act; and

THAT this decision would result in significant hardships for the students in both Transcona and Springfield that would affect the quality of their education; and

THAT the proposal by the Minister of Education on February 12, 2002, neither alleviates nor remedies these hardships; and

THAT this decision results in an increased financial burden on the taxpayers of both the Transcona-Springfield School Division and the province of Manitoba; and

THAT on March 13, 2002, the number of resident electors required by The Public Schools Act requested the Minister of Education to convene a Board of Reference to decide the matter.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly request the Minister of Education to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide the matter.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table in the House the 2002 Report on the Investigation of Missing Artifacts at the Anthropology Museum of the University of Manitoba, present the report of section 20 of The Auditor General Act.

Also I am pleased to table in the House the reports of members' expenses for the year ended March 31, 2002, in compliance with section 38(1) of the Indemnities, Allowances and Retirement Benefits Regulation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 40—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), that leave be given to introduce Bill 40, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: This bill brings in a number of changes to The Highway Traffic Act, all part of this Government's efforts to improve safety on our highways in this province.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 202—The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that leave be given to introduce Bill 202, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

* (13:35)

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I have received a petition from a number of residents who reside in the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews who have asked that the name of my constituency be changed from Gimli to Gimli-St. Andrews. The reason, of course, is that, although there are some 21 200 residents in the constituency of Gimli, over half of them reside in the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews. The name Gimli, of course, is a very historic name and has been the name of a constituency for a very long time. Therefore, we want to certainly maintain the name of Gimli. Also, St. Andrews itself is a very historic name, and the municipality of St. Andrews is one of the largest in Manitoba. Therefore, I believe it should be recognized as a partial name of a constituency. As I said, over half of the population of my constituency reside in the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews, so I

feel it would be an opportunity to recognize them.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in the last census, the population of St. Andrews has increased by a considerable amount, as has the Rural Municipality of Gimli, so the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews is one of the fastest growing in Manitoba. Therefore, I feel it is proper that we should recognize the people of St. Andrews and West St. Paul in the name change.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 42—The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), that leave be given to introduce Bill 42, The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: This bill continues with the Government's safety agenda. In this case, it addresses a number of safety issues involving off-road vehicles.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Hamiota Elementary School 21 Grade 6 students under the direction of Mrs. Linda Irwin. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Also in the public gallery we have from Champlain School 15 Grades 4 and 5 students under the direction of Mr. Gordon Armstrong. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

Also in the public gallery we have from St. George School nine Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Pierre Bedard. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

Also in the public gallery we have from Parkview School 21 Grades 5 to 12 students under the direction of Mr. Harvey Walker. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also in the public gallery we have from Glenboro School 13 Grade 6 students under the direction of Mrs. Marilyn Cullen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Chiropractic Care Coverage Reinstatement

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, to date more than 50 000 Manitobans have sent letters to this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) expressing their disappointment in the Doer government's decision to cut chiropractic services in this province.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker, residents from every constituency throughout the province have sent letters to this minister concerning the fact of the loss of access to chiropractic care. Will the Premier for all of Manitoba listen to those Manitobans who have sent letters, thousands and thousands of letters? Will the Premier do the right thing and reverse his decision to cut chiropractic services?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We listened to all Manitobans and Manitobans want a government that is balanced and fair. They want a government that has reduced the spending that took place in the three years before the last election of a billion dollars under the Conservatives, to now

half of that in the Public Accounts under the present Government.

They want a government that improves health care. They also want a government that deals with the costs in health care. We have made decisions to reduce the 13 vice-presidents in the administrative structure that was left to us, bequeathed by the Conservatives with two health authorities in the city of Winnipeg. We have reduced that down to one. We reduced the rural health authorities by one, Mr. Speaker. We are reducing the number of school divisions by a third, which is being opposed by members opposite. We have negotiated with the doctors a six-month zero, and a reduction of \$12 million for labs covered by the MMA.

Mr. Speaker, every Budget decision we make is based on the fact that we need a balanced approach. Yes, there have been reductions in the chiropractic spending. There have been reductions in the past under members opposite. There are only five provinces in Canada that are covering partial chiropractic services, five other provinces who are not covering it.

It is not covered under the Canada Health Act. Those 50 000 letters should go to Ottawa, which does not cover, under the Canada Health Act, free services.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to speak about balance. This is a Premier who ran a deficit in Manitoba last year because he could not balance his books.

Thousands of Manitobans visit chiropractors each year for the treatment of back pain. Many Manitobans find chiropractic care more effective than traditional medicine in restoring their quality of life. The sad part is the Government cut of chiropractic services is really an attack on those who cannot afford it. It is an attack on hardworking Manitobans and seniors on fixed incomes.

Will the Premier do the right thing on behalf of hardworking Manitobans, seniors on fixed incomes, and reverse his decision to cut chiropractic services?

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the guests in the gallery, our rules in the Chamber are to be no participation from our guests. That is either through clapping or cheering. That is the rule of our Chamber. I would ask the full co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: The heavy hand of government reduced the number of covered visits by three from in the past, so there should not be too much feigning of indignation by members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we have just received a report from Stats Canada that says the provincial governments, more than Ottawa, have been shouldering the burden of dramatic rise in health care costs. Stats Canada said the higher spending by lower levels of government comes at the same time the federal government is reducing its expenditures. That is a federal agency that has said Ottawa is downloading its responsibilities onto the provinces, but not cash.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, that means to not only balance the Budget, lower the debt, which we have done, that decisions have to be made. We have cut some administrative costs in this Budget in one of the regional health authorities. We have cut the lab costs of \$12 million.

Chiropractic services are not under the Canada Health Act. That is an issue Mr. Romanow is looking at in the health care commission that has been commissioned by Ottawa. Five provinces have partial coverage; Manitoba is one of them. Five provinces have no coverage of those services. We are hoping in discussions with the chiropractors that we can come forward with a long-term plan with them. We do know the whole issue of coverage is also being discussed by the federal commission, and we think, obviously, we have to act before that commission produces its report.

Mr. Murray: It was his Government under his leadership that cut \$4 million away from chiropractic services, Mr. Speaker, not the federal government, his Government that did it.

It would not be uncommon for the Doer government to do a flip-flop when there is public

pressure put on them. We saw in the year 2000, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) did a flip-flop over her ability to raid \$30 million from Autopac. This year alone the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has done a flip-flop on the basis that they were going to spend a million dollars of taxpayers' money to build a sandwich factory.

It is not too late for this Government to do the right thing. I ask the Premier of Manitoba: Will he do the right thing? Will he listen to the thousands and thousands of letters that have come in to his office and to the Minister of Health? Will he do the right thing and reverse his decision to cut chiropractic services?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to once again kindly remind our guests in the public gallery, there is to be no participation by the guests in the public gallery, and that includes applauding. I would ask the full co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: Today must be Tuesday because this is the increase spending day from the Conservatives. Yesterday was probably the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We have a situation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were decisions that were made, tough decisions throughout the Budget. We are reducing the number of school divisions. Members opposite are opposed to doing that. We think it makes good sense. We are reducing the administrative costs of a number of regional health authorities. We did that when we came into office. We reduced the lab costs by \$12 million with the MMA.

Obviously, we have respect for the job chiropractors perform. We have respect for their profession. That is why there is partial coverage in Manitoba. Five provinces in Canada have no coverage. The average amount of money from Workers Compensation, MPI and the provincial government, I believe, averages out about \$75,000 per chiropractor. That is obviously important for that professional service and the respect individuals get.

Having said that, we have had discussions with chiropractors, but we are making decisions. The whole issue of what will be covered under the new Canada Health Act, whether it will all be covered or not be covered, whether all provinces are in or not. *[interjection]* Well, the member opposite, of course, when he worked for Brian Mulroney, they did not cover them for one cent.

Chiropractic Care Coverage Reinstatement

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, over 50 000 Manitobans are now up in arms over the Doer government's cut to chiropractic care. When 70 percent of people in Canada have access to chiropractic coverage, this Government has cut it.

* (13:50)

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why he is not willing to listen to over 50 000 Manitobans. These are real people with real concerns, and he has brushed them off as if they are insignificant, irrelevant, unimportant. Why will he not listen?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, in the interests of those who are in the gallery today who might not have been here yesterday: Yesterday, the member stood up and said pay more for palliative care, even though our Government did have the palliative care program. Last week, they said pay more for midwifery, even though their government did have the midwifery program.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Yes, Mr. Speaker. *Beauchesne* 417 says he should not provoke debate. We were not asking him to spend more money on palliative care; we were asking him to honour a promise he made to these people two years ago.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member talked about listening to Manitobans and I wanted to point out we have been listening to Manitobans throughout our three years. That is why they have expanded nursing coverage, we settled with the doctors, and we expanded the programs that we had to expand.

I was attempting to point that out to the member, who seems to be selective in her approach to the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne* 417 states that ministers answering questions should not provoke debate.

I would like to ask all honourable members and to remind all honourable members a point of order is to point out to the Speaker the breach of a rule or the departure from practices of the House and not to be used for debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, to conclude his answer, please.

Mr. Chomiak: To conclude, Mr. Speaker, members opposite have asked us to decrease spending in health. So I do not understand: one day, one issue; one day, the next issue. They cannot have it both ways.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, how does this Minister of Health justify his decision to his backbenchers who had no say in this decision and yet thousands of patients from each of their constituencies have signed letters of protest? He is not even listening to his own backbenchers.

Mr. Chomiak: As I have indicated in this House, Mr. Speaker, the federal government does not cover chiropractic. We are looking to Romanow to give us some suggestions. I suggest many of those 50 000 form letters that have come in ought to be sent to the federal government, to Ottawa, to outline the

significance that Canadians have for a chiropractor.

We are one of five provinces that covers it and, Mr. Speaker, I add: The former government, of which that member was the assistant to the Health Minister, cut chiropractic from 15 to 12 visits.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Minister of Health today if he is prepared to do the right thing and reverse his short-sighted, hard-headed decision to cut back chiropractic care for people in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think most Manitobans would agree, over the past almost three years since we have been in office we have paid attention to what the public has to say. That is why we put in place our programs across the system. That is why we brought back nursing diploma, et cetera. We are willing to listen; we are willing to talk. We need those savings in order to balance off the health care expenses, and we will continue to manage the health care budget in the best balance that we can, but we look to Ottawa to help fund some of those costs.

Palliative Care Medication Expenses

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a new question.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): On a new question, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, we learned that the Minister of Health has not kept his word to fund drugs at home for dying patients, and he was challenged by Hospice and Palliative Care Manitoba to live up to his word.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health when he plans to have these drugs covered and if Manitoba Health will cover this cost for all palliative care patients in this province, rural and urban.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, when we came into office in the fall of 2000, we brought in a comprehensive palliative care—[interjection] Well, in '99—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:55)

Mr. Chomiak: When I appeared at the palliative care conference in the fall of 2000 to outline the extension of our palliative care program that we had expanded from the bed program at St. Boniface Hospital to include 24-hour doctors, to include nurses on call, to include a 24-hour, seven-day approach, to include co-ordinators in all regions, I indicated, as part of our overall strategy that was not in place for the 11 lean Conservative years of cuts and the dark ages, that we would be bringing in a drug program.

Funding—Regional Disparities

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the minutes from the February 27, 2002, board minutes of the Central Region RHA, which says funding and program disparity has also been an issue between the urban and rural health authorities. Knowing this, how can the region lobby for equality in order to provide necessary programs and services to our residents? One example of the inequality cited was the amount of funding received by the WRHA for the palliative care program, compared to that of rural regions.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health to explain why the WRHA received \$2.75 million for palliative care and the rural RHAs received nothing.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Another example of a little information being dangerous for the member opposite.

The 24-hour service is available across the province. It co-ordinates with rural health authorities, in case the member does not know. But she does know, because they did not have a palliative care program.

Secondly, we put in place funding for a palliative care co-ordinator in every region, Mr. Speaker, something the member does not know because they did not have a palliative care program.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Minister of Health why he is offering a

lower standard of palliative care to people living in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, if the member perhaps was present when I addressed the palliative care hospice conference in the last two years when we discussed the entire issue of palliative care, the member might know that, in Manitoba, palliative care was pioneered by rural Manitoba, and, in a lot of cases, there are components and segments of programs in place in rural Manitoba, and that we advised them we were rolling out the program across the province in a variety of fashions and a variety of functions.

But at least we have a palliative care program, a comprehensive program that is recognized in Canada as probably the best in the country, notwithstanding we are still developing our drug portion of that program. We do not have to apologize or take a back seat to the dearth of palliative care for 11 lean years when the members opposite were government.

Flooding (R.M. of Stuartburn) Gardenton Log Dams

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, last week we were apprised of the fact the provincial government cut the major retention water dam in the southeast area. Today it has come to my attention that the dam on the U.S. border at Gardenton, which is a log dam, has had three logs removed, and the water is being diverted beside the Gardenton flood diversion area and flooding significant portions of the rural parts of the R.M. of Stuartburn.

Could the minister of highways in charge of Emergency Measures today tell us who ordered the removal of the log dams in Gardenton?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Acting Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, of course, the issue of flooding has been of considerable concern in southeastern Manitoba and certainly in this House over the last couple of weeks. I know the Member for Emerson would like names and one can only assume some personal accountability or blame to be assigned as a result of that, but in regard to his particular question I will take it under advisement on behalf of the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable ministers, when taking a question under notice or to bring back information that should be the end of it. There should be no preamble, no postamble.

Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, this might be of significant concern to this Government, but it is the livelihood and the lives of the very people who live in Stuartburn I am concerned about.

* (14:00)

Could this minister of highways, in charge of Emergency Measures today tell this House what measures he has put in place, what measures his Government has put in place to compensate for the damages that are being caused by wilful removal of retention structures in this area?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I think first the member should acknowledge the steps this Government has taken to move more quickly than has ever been done before with any other disaster to get assistance out to people. Thirty-three people in Vassar yesterday. I was just out in La Broquerie, and we are today delivering aid and assistance to people in La Broquerie as we speak in this House. So we need no lecturing from members opposite in terms of assistance. If the member has concerns about the operation of any particular part of the diking system, it is only appropriate the Acting Minister of Conservation (Mr. Caldwell) deal with that.

As the EMO Minister, I was just out in La Broquerie meeting with the council and the R.M. of Hanover, and I make no apologies for having been there. We will get the information the member wants through the normal process, taking under notice and getting the facts to him, but we are providing assistance to the people in need.

Mr. Speaker: May I once again remind all honourable ministers, if you take a question under notice, to take the question under notice, do not add to it. That is against our rules. I am asking

all honourable ministers to please follow our rules, and all members in the House.

Mr. Jack Penner: My question is to the minister in charge of Emergency Measures, who is also in charge of the compensatory packages that have traditionally been under his ministry. I am asking this minister whether he is prepared to tell this House today whether there will be full compensation paid for the crop damages, to the other damages that are incurred by flooding in the southern part and southeast Manitoba. What kind of an answer is he going to give to the people of Manitoba today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we recognized 10 days ago or two weeks ago, close to two weeks ago now, with the situation on the Roseau River and the peak expected and with water and thunderstorms being unpredictable, that the Gardenton Floodway needed backup. There were sandbags that were airlifted virtually because of the soft nature of the land onto the Gardenton Floodway. There was a backup system developed to protect people. There are contingency plans in place to deal with any breach of the Gardenton Floodway, and the same kind of answer that people got in Vassar, Manitoba, close to two weeks ago about being treated fairly, that is the same kind of response people will get adjacent to the Gardenton Floodway with this Government.

Flooding Disaster Assistance

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the flooding in southeastern Manitoba continues to be a cause for concern for individuals, business and communities. In many cases, the water levels in that part of the country have exceeded the 1997-plus-two flood protection levels. This disaster will have considerable financial implications for the flood victims and the local economies.

My question is to the minister responsible for disaster assistance, and that is whether or not he has had any discussions with his federal counterparts about the possibility of a JERI-style program to help flood victims, as was the case in 1997.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I can indicate, first of all, our first effort in terms of dealing with the disaster was to make sure in our relations with the federal government they were on site to see how significant the damage was, and I concur with the member we are dealing with historic levels of rainfall, certainly historic in recent memory.

Those of us who have been there, and I know the member will have been to many of the affected areas, will be aware that it is particularly problematic for many of the communities because they have been hit before. I was in La Broquerie for the third time since being minister, the third time they have faced this kind of difficulty.

I can indicate I have already advised the minister's office, Minister McCallum, and it is my hope to be able to meet with the federal minister. I have requested a meeting within the next short period of time to discuss many of the items, including quick approval by the federal government of the fact this is clearly a disaster.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer, and I wish him well in his discussions with the federal minister.

Flood Protection

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Government Services, and that is: Because of the fact that the water levels have, in many cases, exceeded the 1997-plus-two levels, has he assessed whether any additional floodproofing measures will be required in the affected area?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member will know being a former minister responsible for Emergency Measures, the first step in any disaster is dealing with the immediate situation. The second step is the step we took last week announcing the program. The third step is getting assistance out to people. We are doing that this week, yesterday in Vassar, today in La Broquerie.

Following that, we will be assessing what can be done in the future to build in other mitigation measures. In fact, when I was at La Broquerie, some of the discussions then were aimed particularly at that direction, not only what we can do in the short term because we are still facing significant short-term challenges, but what we can in the long term as well.

I can tell you we have learned from some of the successes and some of the mistakes of '97. I am sure we will continue to learn.

Disaster Assistance

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): My final supplementary for the minister is: Has he considered any changes to the \$100,000 cap as to removing that cap and also the 20% deductible?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Well, Mr. Speaker, I remember this issue very well, being in opposition, when we urged the government at the time to make the increase to the ceiling of \$100,000. I can say to the member opposite, the main concern of people we are addressing right now is the need to get the kind of cash advances which were put forward in '97 into people's hands, but unlike 1997, where it took a minimum four to five weeks to get it in place, we are getting money out to people in need within two weeks, something we should all be proud of in this province.

Pinawa, Manitoba All-Party Task Force

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier on a federal-provincial issue: Yesterday and today, a car which uses hydrogen fuel cells was demonstrated at The Forks. I have previously raised with the Premier the need to have a meeting involving all Manitoba party leaders with the federal minister of natural resources to discuss the future of Pinawa and the potential role of Pinawa and other Manitoba institutions in the development of the hydrogen economy. On more than one occasion, the Premier has indicated his support for this initiative.

I ask the Premier today, with the mayor of Pinawa in the gallery, will the Premier actually

proceed with his commitment to organize an all-party task force meeting with the federal minister of natural resources?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there are more than just hydrogen fuel cells that are at play here, and the minister will know, as the former minister responsible, that the whole issue of the waste materials, the disproportionate treatment that Manitoba and Pinawa are getting relative to other projects in the Ottawa Valley that were cleaned up between five and seven years, and to contrast that with the proposal that was bequeathed to Pinawa with the decision to close down AECL in pre-'97 years, I think, is very regrettable.

We have attempted to set up meetings with the former minister of natural resources. We are pursuing a strategy on a number of initiatives that have been identified by the mayor and council of Pinawa. One of the strategies, of course, has come into play with the Acsion development that we have supported with, I think, very little support from our federal partners. So sometimes, when we propose these ideas to the federal government, we do not get very far.

Secondly, I met as late as Friday or last Monday with Lloyd Axworthy. We are pursuing a strategy on climate change and the Climate Change office that we think, and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) thinks, is appropriate for the Pinawa area. Apparently, Canada is looking at two locations. We certainly believe that Manitoba and Pinawa, in western Canada, should be one of the locations.

* (14:10)

Thirdly, on hydrogen fuel cells, we have met with the scientists at Pinawa on the idea of hydrogen. The mayor and council certainly are supporting that. Any support we can get from all parties to pursue that further with the federal government we think will be helpful. We think it makes more sense, obviously, to pursue this strategy. That is why we have initiated leadership in this regard.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier. Since this issue has come up a number

of times and indeed involves more than just hydrogen, as the Premier has mentioned, I would ask: When does the Premier see that such an all-party task force might be able to proceed with its activities on behalf of Pinawa?

Mr. Doer: I hope the all-party groups will stick together on hydrogen in Pinawa a little bit better than some members did on the issue of agriculture last week. I want to thank the Conservatives for sticking with the Government on calling for 100% support of federal money.

We will pursue the issue of hydrogen fuel cells and I am prepared to do that with all parties, but we have certainly initiated this as a government.

Chiropractic Care All-Party Task Force

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary to the Premier. Since the Premier is trying to shift all the blame vis-à-vis chiropractic services to the federal government, would the Premier indicate whether he sees there is a role for an all-party task force in this area to make the case for chiropractors at the federal level and not just at the provincial level?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite sat in a Cabinet for a number of years where not only did they not support chiropractors, they cut health care money.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River Heights, on a point of order.

Mr. Gerrard: *Beauchesne's* 417 says that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should address the matter raised and not provoke debate.

The issue here is with the chiropractor services, and it is not what the Premier is not doing instead of what is happening or what happened in the past.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party asked us to set up an all-party committee to deal with chiropractic services. It is completely in order to talk about the issues of consistency on positions from the Leader of the Liberal Party in terms of how we will deal with an all-party delegation.

We actually think it is helpful to the debate to point out the contradictions the member has on, yes, the arena today, no, the arena tomorrow; the contradictions on agriculture; the contradictions on the statute of limitations, one position against the new bill and one position in favour of the new bill. We think that is completely within order and completely consistent with parliamentary democracy. We are not afraid of the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on the same point of order.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I think the facts speak clearly that the federal government of the past took all the money away and today's government is doing absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to ruling on the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River Heights, I would like to once again remind all honourable members a point of order should be to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from Manitoba practices, not to be used for debate.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River Heights, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, conclude your answer.

Mr. Doer: Provincial and territorial governments, more than Ottawa, have been shouldering the burden of dramatic rise in health care costs, Stats Canada said. The federal government has downloaded its responsibilities onto the

provinces. When did that start? It started in the '95-96 Budget which this member voted for.

We will work to get the Romanow Commission to consider a lot of the areas like home care, drug programs, chiropractic services, but he had his option. He chose to vote against health care when he was in office. We are voting for health care every day by being in Government, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 14

Brandon Media Comments

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Manitobans everywhere are demanding better accountability for public education dollars and better delivery of these public dollars to classrooms throughout the province. Over three Budgets, the Doer government has invested in our public school system at historic levels and restored support for educational excellence.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education, who last week outlined editorial support for school division modernization from the *Portage Daily Graphic* and *Steinbach Carillon*, to give the House an indication of editorial support in his home community of Brandon.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): I thank the member for her question. Manitobans are indeed seeking greater public accountability and responsibility for public education dollars. The modernization of our school system contained in Bill 14 is long overdue in Manitoba and has long taken effect elsewhere in Manitoba.

The *Brandon Sun* has provided a consistent editorial commentary on this issue, Mr. Speaker. In July 2000, they had an editorial entitled: Reduce school boundaries, by which they stated that the previous Tory government chickened out on implementing the report. They also noted that the Government is right to force divisions to make better use of public education resources.

A year later they had an editorial entitled: Minister right to push for mergers, followed by another editorial entitled: Amalgamation gets high marks. It seems members opposite are the only people in the province that do not recognize

this bill is designed to provide greater use of dollars.

Manitoba Hydro Annual Report Tabling Request

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, in sworn testimony before the Public Utilities Board, senior officials from Manitoba Hydro confirmed an undertaking that they would file with the Public Utilities Board Manitoba Hydro's annual statement dated March 31, 2002, as soon as their board had approved it on June 13. That statement was approved by the board on June 13 but, subsequently, officials at Manitoba Hydro are telling the PUB they are not allowed to table the annual report in a public fashion until the minister tables the report in this Legislature.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for Hydro, if he will do the right thing and table today the annual report of the Manitoba Hydro Board, which was approved by the board of Manitoba Hydro on June 13. Will he table it today?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I indicated yesterday when I get the report I will be happy to table it. I have not yet received the report.

I note, if you look back over the last several years, the report is usually brought forward to the Government by July 31, usually very close, if not exactly on July 31. That is the normal time sequence. The member knows that full well, like yesterday when he indicated the DBRS report was the most recent report, and he was wrong. That was not the most recent report. He has his facts wrong again today.

Mr. Loewen: In a supplementary question to the minister, I would ask him if he could not take the time—I noticed that Mr. Bob Brennan, the president of Manitoba Hydro, was in the building at noon today to meet with Mr. Brennan to get the financial statement which was approved by the board on June 13 and table it before this House, so the people of Manitoba will know the financial condition of Manitoba Hydro?

* (14:20)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear that Hydro will table its annual report within the statutory requirements. They normally do that in July as they have done in previous years. I have checked the record. There have been many occasions in previous years when the former government did not table that report in the House until December. So we will do it in a timely fashion once we receive it. We have not received it yet.

Mr. Loewen: The reason this minister is refusing to receive the report from Mr. Brennan and is refusing to table it before this House is because he knows full well the annual report will show clearly that Manitoba Hydro does not have the cash necessary to pay the \$150-million retroactive dividend to this Government.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I do not have this year's annual report yet, but I do have the 50th Annual Report of Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for last year. The cash provided from operations in the year 2001 was \$334 million and the cash provided in the year 2000 was \$374 million. If the member would check the facts, he would know Manitoba Hydro is producing an enormous amount of cash based on exports that were built under the Limestone project.

Justice System Judicial Vacancies

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, 14 months ago, in this very Chamber, the Minister of Justice stated, and I quote: We now have a record level of full-time judges in the province of Manitoba.

The Premier also stated on the record, and I quote: We have more judges than were in place under the former administration.

Now, according to the *Free Press*, there are currently 39 provincial court judges, the same number as when the Doer government was elected. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain where his record level of judges has disappeared over the last 14 months?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised because the honourable member received correspondence, I believe, from the

department or from myself, perhaps personally, that set out all the matters.

On coming into office, there were 39 full-time provincial judges. In our first Budget, we increased that by 1 to 40 full-time judges. As a result of a retirement on December 31, it is my understanding that there is now a vacancy and, as members opposite know, the position of Chief Judge is currently open. When that appointment is made, we will either have 40 or 39, and if there are 39 of course we will proceed to appointments.

Court Delays

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, 14 months ago the Minister of Justice told Manitobans, and I quote: The issue of court backlogs is a serious one and that is why we are addressing it.

Manitobans have now read that the minister's action plan, 14 months in the making, is to blame the judges. Can the minister table any additional action plans to address growing court backlogs, or are Manitobans to be satisfied with the minister's point-the-finger action plan?

An Honourable Member: Tell us again how you hired one judge.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Did somebody hear the voice of the Conservative Party again, Mr. Speaker?

Under this administration, of course, we have increased the resources to the Prosecutions branch I believe by 29 percent. It is not just a matter—I recognize it is Tuesday, it is spend more day—of spending more; it is not just a matter of saying, well, you need more judges and prosecutors. What Manitobans expect and what they deserve, what we are working hard, is not just to say, oh, it is more resources. Mr. Speaker, it is more wise use of resources. That is why, in coming into office, we had an Ernst & Young report done of Prosecution resources. They said the answer is not simply more prosecutors. It is different organizational structure; it is more support staff.

So the member opposite, on asking that question, I think should be a bit embarrassed.

Between 1995 and 1997, the former government cut \$800,000 from Prosecutions and underspent by \$1.3 million at a time when there were double-digit increases in the numbers of criminal offences going to Prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would like to make a correction. When I was tabling the Auditor General's Report, I inadvertently said U of M instead of U of W. So I just wanted to correct that for the record.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Laura and Christine Lafreniere

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I rise today to recognize two very special young ladies from Somerset, Manitoba. Three years ago sisters Laura and Christine Lafreniere, aged four and three at the time, viewed a documentary about alopecia, a skin disease which causes hair loss and can affect people of all ages. Laura and Christine took special notice of the children in this documentary and dedicated themselves to this cause. They let their hair grow for three years, then donated it to a special organization called Locks of Love. This non-profit organization makes wigs for underprivileged children afflicted by hair loss.

Because of their selfless efforts, Laura's and Christine's teacher, Madame Marielle Martel nominated them for the Manitoba Teachers' Society Growing Minds Young Humanitarian Award. The sisters were honoured during a special ceremony on April 25 at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People at The Forks with specially commissioned, engraved medals and a monetary award of \$1,000. The presentation was also repeated at a special ceremony in my home town of Somerset.

Laura and Christine's parents, Edgar and Denise Lafreniere, are extremely proud of their two daughters. I commend them on supporting Laura and Christine through this endeavour. These are two remarkable young ladies who will always be remembered in our community for

giving of themselves to do something positive for others. They should be very pleased knowing they will undoubtedly bring much joy to the future recipients of the wigs that they helped to create.

Rick Hansen

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it was my great honour to speak on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) at the Rick Hansen 15th Anniversary-Completion of the Man in Motion World Tour reception at The Forks on June 23.

I also represented the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities (Mr. Sale) the next day at a reception at the Rehabilitation Hospital at the Health Sciences Centre. Mr. Speaker, at these receptions I joined the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) in welcoming Mr. Hansen to Manitoba as part of the cross-Canada launch of his new major national campaign to raise awareness about breakthroughs in research and treatment. The campaign also hopes to raise funds to accelerate the discovery of a cure for spinal cord injury.

Fifteen years ago Mr. Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour helped Canadians get closer to realizing the ideals that inspired him to gain world attention by circling the globe in his wheelchair. The Man in Motion Tour was a resounding success, raising significant funds for spinal cord research and raising public awareness to a level where genuine change was more possible than ever.

I would like to thank Pharmasave Central for lending its support to Mr. Hansen's outstanding work on behalf of people with disabilities. This Government has also been very committed to people living with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Emerson, on a point of order.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I wonder if the NDP caucus would mind if they would have

their caucus meeting in their caucus room instead of in the Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that if they wish to carry on a conversation, to go either in the loge or in the hallway. It does get very difficult to hear the honourable member who has the floor.

* * *

Mr. Aglugub: This Government has also been very committed to people living with disabilities. Not only are we the first province to have a Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, but we also released the groundbreaking white paper on disabilities. We hosted the first ever round table discussion on disability issues, which heard from representatives of more than 60 community groups from across Manitoba. We also announced provincial support for the University of Manitoba's new master's program in disability studies.

Mr. Speaker, it was a great honour to welcome Mr. Hansen back in our province. I would like to wish him the best of luck with his new venture.

* (14:30)

Nygaard Park

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on June 22 my colleague, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), joined the almost thousand people who gathered in the town of Deloraine for the opening of a new park. The day was also a homecoming for Peter Nygaard and his mother, Ms. Hilikka Nygaard, and their family who returned to the town for the first time since the 1950s.

Mr. Speaker, Peter Nygaard is the founder of Nygaard International, a multimillion-dollar clothing retailer originating in Winnipeg, which now spans the globe. Thanks to his generous donation of \$25,000, the town of Deloraine was able to convert a rundown CP Rail yard into a mix of green space, flowers, bushes and benches to be known as Nygaard Park. Mr. Nygaard also donated, generously, 5000 Nygaard T-shirts for

the town to sell, which is expected to generate an additional \$50,000. A portion of the donated money will go towards replacement flags for the Deloraine's Fly the Flags of the World millennium project, an exceptional tourist attraction for the region.

To commemorate the opening of the park, Mr. Nygaard acted as the town marshal, driving his Excalibur car in a parade through the streets of Deloraine, as well as staging a fashion show. He also took some time to pay a visit to the modest home where he lived with his family after emigrating from Finland in 1952 for fear of communism and the continued threat of war. Also accompanying Mr. Nygaard to the festivities was Beverly Johnson, a supermodel, who was the first African-American to be featured on the cover of *Vogue* magazine.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a word of thanks to Peter Nygaard for making such a contribution to rural development, tourism and conservation in our province, and in this case, particularly to Deloraine. I would also like to congratulate Brian Franklin, Mayor of Deloraine and Grant Cassils as chair of Deloraine's Nygaard Park project for the development and successful completion of this project.

Collation des grades

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Le lundi 3 juin 2002, j'ai eu le plaisir d'assister à la collation des grades de l'Université du Manitoba et à la remise des diplômes du Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. J'étais très fière comme député de Riel que certains de nos résidents étaient parmi les finissants et finissantes du Collège, y compris Linda Ducharme, Annique Keating, Jacqueline Philippet et Jennifer Wiebe, Baccalauréat en éducation; Sarah Gompf et David Simard, Baccalauréat ès arts; Christian Bissonnette, Bachelor of Physical Education; Margaret Murray, Baccalauréat ès science; et Thomas Ryan, Baccalauréat en administration des affaires.

Ce sont des étudiants et étudiantes des écoles d'immersion et des écoles françaises qui ont poursuivi leurs études au Collège. Félicitations. Bravo à Thomas Ryan qui a mérité la médaille d'excellence du Collège en administration des affaires, le prix de la Fondation

canadienne de la gérance du crédit, et la bourse d'excellence Powercorp.

La remise des diplômes célébrait non seulement les finissants et finissantes mais aussi leurs parents et familles qui les ont appuyés pendant leurs années d'études. Le récipiendaire du grade honorifique était Raymond Breton, ancien du Collège.

Merci à Paul Ruest, recteur, et au personnel du Collège pour leurs contributions au succès des finissants et des finissantes.

Translation

Convocation

On Monday, June 3, I had the pleasure of attending the University of Manitoba convocation and the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface graduation ceremony. I was very proud as the Member for Riel that a number of our residents were among the graduates of the Collège, including Linda Ducharme, Annique Keating, Jacqueline Philippot and Jennifer Wiebe, who received their Bachelor of Education; Sarah Gompf and David Simard, Bachelor of Arts; Christian Bissonnette, Bachelor of Physical Education; Margaret Murray, Bachelor of Science; Thomas Ryan, Bachelor of Business Administration.

They are students from immersion and French schools who pursued their studies at the Collège. Congratulations. Bravo to Thomas Ryan who won the medal of excellence in Business Administration, the Canadian foundation for credit management prize and the Powercorp merit scholarship.

The graduation exercises celebrated not only the graduates but also their parents and families who supported them through their years of study. The recipient of the honorary degree was

Raymond Breton, an alumnus of the Collège. Thank you to Rector Paul Ruest and to the staff of the Collège for their contributions to the success of the graduates.

Gimli High School Awards

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, it was my great pleasure to attend the Gimli High

School Awards Night on Thursday, June 13 at Misty Lake Lodge.

On this occasion, Gimli high school students were recognized for their achievements in all academic subject areas, as well as for the excellence in athletics and the arts.

Ms. J. Krutkevich was the master of ceremonies for the evening where awards were presented to dozens of students in over 40 categories.

Mr. Speaker, the students of Gimli High School have worked diligently over the course of the school year and have demonstrated their skills and ability in many fields. Being recognized with the honour of one of these awards does not come without hard work and dedication. Certainly, all the students recognized are well deserved of this recognition.

Mr. Speaker, at the ceremony, it was my pleasure to present the Ed Helwer MLA Book Award to three students: Crystal Gennick, Lyndsay Spulnick and Melissa Allen who all received the highest standing in History 30S at the Gimli High School.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend thanks to the Awards Night Committee for all their hard work and commitment to this project. Their contributions helped make this evening a great success. I would also like to express special thanks to Tracey Vincent, Charmaine Crewson, Amber Hancharek and Brynna Stefanson whose musical performances at the awards ceremony were enjoyed by all in attendance.

On behalf of all members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to all those who were recognized for their efforts and accomplishments. It is a pleasure to see so much talent and promise in the youth in the Gimli area. I wish all the award recipients continued success in the future. Congratulations once again.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call second reading of Bill 39.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 39—The City of Winnipeg Charter Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 39, The City of Winnipeg Charter Act; Loi sur la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce Bill 39, The City of Winnipeg Charter Act. Bill 39 replaces The City of Winnipeg Act and is intended to provide a new legislative framework to enable the City of Winnipeg to govern and operate more effectively in today's environment. The bill modernizes the legislation, simplifying the framework, reorganizing and condensing the content and clarifying the language, making it more accessible and usable for people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I think this is one important element of the act. It has been a very large act of over 600 pages. This presentation, even though I know that members quailed a little at the size of it, is still half the size of its previous version.

It is an act which is used by citizens. It is used by businesspeople. It is used by developers. It is one act, I think, where there is regular consultation by ordinary citizens, whether they are people involved in community groups or community activity or whether they are business people involved in local BIZes, or in local neighbourhood organizations. So the desirability to put this act into plain language, I think, was something which will be welcomed by many people. Also, the condensation of this act into fewer sections, the consolidation of portions of the act into fewer sections, also makes it easier to use. So I commend that element of it to members.

I think many of us would still like to see this made more accessible. We would still like to see, wherever possible, the use of plain language. Nevertheless, enormous strides have

been made in this area, and we anticipate that an act which is regularly used by citizens, as well as by other governments, will now be made more accessible.

This bill, as members know, is a significant accomplishment. It is the combination of much hard work. Indeed, some of this was begun under the former government, when the member from Niakwa was the minister. I want to say that that work provided us with a very useful beginning upon which to build. We have added to it. It has been a few years now since the previous government did begin that work, and we have obviously updated that as well and added to it, but I want to recognize the previous ministers and the previous staff's involvement in this and the contribution that has made.

* (14:40)

The specific amendments before you, however, were developed in full partnership with the City of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, we listened very carefully to what the City said, and for that reason, I believe that the new proposed legislation will be particularly relevant and effective for the City of Winnipeg and its citizens.

Let me briefly outline the direction of this proposed new City of Winnipeg Charter Act. In many sections of the proposed new charter, provisions have been carried forward from the current City of Winnipeg Act with no change in the effect. The law remains the same, but the language and organization, as I suggested earlier, have been modernized and made more accessible.

We were particularly careful to ensure that public input and accountability requirements were supported. In other sections of the proposed charter, Mr. Speaker, the provisions provide the City of Winnipeg with a greater degree of flexibility in both administrative and legislative areas. This greater flexibility recognizes the complexity of city governance today and the City's need to be able to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

I would like to highlight two specific aspects of this. The bill provides the City with what are

called natural person powers, which would allow the City to conduct their day-to-day business without the explicit specific legislative authority that was contained in the very large and detailed previous act.

This bill also gives the City 14 broad areas of authority or what are in legislative terms, this type of legislation, called spheres of jurisdiction. These spheres reflect the current activities of the City, but are expressed in a more general form to give the City more flexibility to develop solutions that are responsive to its challenges and without the need, quite frequent need, for legislative amendment at the provincial level.

Bill 39 also includes specific amendments intended to provide the City of Winnipeg with the tools it needs to support efforts to revitalize and strengthen the City and to address particular issues specific to large urban centers such as Winnipeg.

The bill gives the City new powers to more effectively deal with derelict properties, including a public process for the City to take title to these properties in order to deal with them in instances where an owner fails to rehabilitate the property themselves. These powers will directly support the City's continuing efforts to eliminate abandoned or boarded-up buildings and to make all neighbourhoods safe and attractive places to live and work.

The bill gives the City new authority to implement tax increment financing, a new flexible financial tool intended to provide the City with a means of targeting assistance towards the redevelopment or revitalization of a designated area. Tax increment financing has been successfully used in more than 45 American states, and, it is believed, has made a significant contribution to the revitalization of cities such as Chicago and Pittsburgh, to name two.

The bill gives the City a new authority to establish a planning commission, which is intended to facilitate the city's redevelopment and revitalization efforts, particularly downtown. A planning commission will consolidate the numerous hearings required to review and approve development proposals into one effective hearing.

The application process and opportunities for public input will not change, but we anticipate that better decisions, more holistic decisions with a better access to all the information will be there and a better access to all of that information for citizens at one hearing rather than many.

Bill 39 also gives the City new authority to vary the tax portions for prescribed classes of property. This amendment is intended to provide the City with the flexibility to address tax issues in Winnipeg that arise from time to time such as condo taxation and services. It will not, however, increase the overall level of taxation of City of Winnipeg citizens.

In addition, the proposed new act would for the first time acknowledge from the outset that the City is a responsible and accountable government. This is an important statement that recognizes the mature relationship between the Province and the City and, for example, enables the City to increase the number of councilors beyond the present 15, comparable in fact to the kinds of responsibilities that exist in The Municipal Act elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, while Bill 39 provides the City and its citizens with a new, modern legislative framework, it also includes greater flexibility and specific tools to address issues, but I want to emphasize that there is more and continuing work to be done.

There are many challenges facing Canada's cities today. It is our intention to continue to work to ensure that the City of Winnipeg has the authority its citizens need to remain a strong and competitive city into the future. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to considering other changes after a thorough review of city governance models elsewhere and, based on our findings, a discussion involving all stakeholders and the general public.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I see this act in the context of the kind of policies that the Government has been pursuing for the City of Winnipeg, and those in particular deal with the issues of the revitalization of downtown, of the inner city residential communities, as well as the bordering or shoulder communities on the edge of downtown and the inner city neighbourhoods.

So I want to emphasize that the Government has proceeded with a very clear policy for the revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods which have included elements of education and training, important elements of housing developed in conjunction with the federal and municipal governments, as well as dealing with Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal training and recreation programs. Mr. Speaker, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program in five designated neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, as well as in Brandon and Thompson, has, in a very short period of time, made substantial opportunities available in the inner city and I think is contributing to the new kind of optimism and hope that we are seeing reflected, not just in the inner city but more generally in Winnipeg, in some of the recent polls that have been discussed in the press.

We have as well, of course, built upon proposals for downtown revitalization through the support for CentreVenture, through support for the Convention Centre, for the most, perhaps, important, the revitalization of the Exchange District, through the reconstruction, the renovation of the former Big 4 building, bringing a new arts consortium into the downtown area, as well as bringing, we hope, very soon over 2000 students daily into the Exchange District through the expansion of Red River community college, the confidence of the private sector through the MEC, Mountain Equipment Co-op. I think the development that has been shown there and at North Portage with the opening of the new movie theatres bodes well for the revitalization of the commercial areas of downtown.

The Government is making substantial contributions not just to Waterfront Drive and to the opening of that area of the downtown but also to the central area through the monies that have been provided for the Millennium Library. In addition, of course, the monies and the private sector investment in downtown is reflected in the new entertainment centre on Portage Avenue.

So, if you look at all of the investments of the private and public sector, the Province and the City of Winnipeg are making in the downtown, I think you will recognize that this is a substantial investment in a new kind of revitalization for Winnipeg. It is supported with the neighbourhood reconstruction, renovation, as

well as the rebuilding of training and education programs and recreation programs in the inner city.

* (14:50)

Then, as we move further outward in the concentric circles, we look at the shoulder neighbourhoods, and we are looking at a joint program. This has been announced jointly with the City of Winnipeg. It is a \$7-million program in each case, and it is spread, of course, over a number of years. But its purpose is to maintain the capital investment in those shoulder neighbourhoods and to ensure that that deterioration which had been very common indeed in the last years of the previous government, had become rapidly, rapidly deteriorating—we know that we have stayed that deterioration; we do not face the thousand boarded-up houses that we had when we came into office. We are not facing the same kinds of arson issues, and we indeed have a number of programs that do offer hope and regeneration to the inner city. It is done, I believe, in a very co-operative manner with both the City and with the federal government. All of those partners, as well as the neighbourhood corporations, are absolutely essential to the kind of city that we want to see rebuilt in Winnipeg.

So the changes to The City of Winnipeg Act, I believe, should be seen in that broader context as well, making it more accessible to citizens and to businesspeople who I believe do use this act on a regular basis. I have, I think, recognized the role of the previous government and the early work that was done on this bill in the consolidation and the condensation of it, and I suggest that, together with the City, we have built upon that. I anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that we will have some support from the members opposite. So, with that, I look forward to the continuing debate on Bill 39 and will listen with interest.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of

Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that the House resolve into Committee of Supply.

Motion agreed to.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Good afternoon. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

We are on line 3. Immigration and Multiculturalism (a) Immigration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,123,400 on page 127 of the main Estimates book. When this committee last sat, there had been agreement to discuss the section on Multiculturalism in 3. Immigration and Multiculturalism prior to consideration of Immigration. Is this still the will of the committee? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I think it is very important that we are finally back in Estimates. I know the Government does not particularly like this procedure. That is why they have been stalling with it for a long period of time under the guise of getting other work done that should have been done a long time ago. It is this inept government that continues down this path of announcing something and then having to scurry about and have legislation to cover it, namely, Bill 14. In the meantime, Mr. Chair, the work and the business of the Legislature was not proceeding.

In particular, I want to address the issue of Bills 29 and 30 which the minister had groups meet her as the kind of special interest groups that we have, that we will be discussing. There are various interest groups out in the community, and these happen to be the engineers and geoscientific professions, the architect professions, Mr. Chairperson.

In fact, they came and met me months ago and indicated that the minister had spun to them

that, as far as the Government was concerned, the bills would have fast passage, but it is the Opposition that would hold back on the passage of these bills. First of all, the Government never introduced them in a timely fashion. They have held them up. Yesterday they allowed three minutes to debate them, which is hardly reasonable. Today, when we wanted to proceed to at least move them on to committee, again, now we understand they will not let them be debated until Thursday morning.

This is the type of sham that this minister and her Government continues to put out there, the kinds of things that she wants to spin out there, whether it is the Estimates process, whether it is dealing with whatever issue that it is. I think it is shameful what this minister has done. We should have been in here a long time ago dealing with the Estimates process. We should have been dealing with the budgets.

Mr. Chairperson: Caution to the Member for Springfield to not discuss House business, but to discuss the issue that we are doing here, which is Multiculturalism. The last few sentences you were not talking Multiculturalism. So you may continue.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Chairperson, The last time I checked, I understand the minister is responsible for The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act as well as The Architects Amendment Act. Or am I wrong in that, Mr. Chairman? Is this not also the role of the minister?

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to inform the Member for Springfield we are discussing, on page 128, 3. Multiculturalism (b) Salaries and Employee Benefits. We are discussing the topic Multiculturalism.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, what we are doing is discussing various groups within society that the minister is supposed to stand up for and defend. I would like to quote for you, Mr. Chairman: "The minority going to be the tyranny against the majority." That is a quote from the Premier (Mr. Doer) just a couple of days ago, on June 20, and this minister sits silently. She is supposed to be standing up for the various communities and groups, including the multicultural community.

She is the one who is supposed to stand up for those new Canadians that decide they want to reside in Manitoba. Instead, she chooses to do nothing. It all ties in directly.

This is not House business. I do not know where the Chairman is getting that advice. This is dealing with the Estimates that are in front of us. The Estimates deal with multiculturalism and they deal with the way the minister is supposed to be defending the various organizations and groups that are under her supposed leadership, or, in this case, the lack of leadership.

We have had all kinds of time. We have let all kinds of time pass because this Government has refused to be in this House in committee dealing with the kinds of Estimates that we are talking about right here now, in particular Bill 29 and Bill 30.

The minister is supposed to be standing up for those groups. Instead, she allows them to hang on, allows the issue to hang on, and it is delayed and delayed and delayed, just like the Estimates process, just like what we are trying to do here with the department of Multiculturalism or Immigration.

Mr. Chairman, I might add, you might want to keep the members opposite under control. I think that it is terribly unfortunate that this Government has shut down debate, is pushing around members of the Opposition, and when we try to stand up, in fact when the Opposition stands up in defence of minority rights, whether it is the chiropractors, whether it is the multicultural communities, whether it is parents who want to at least be heard on the amalgamation issue or whether it has to do with the engineers or the architects, what is the answer that we get from the Premier (Mr. Doer) on June 20, page 2730: "are the minority going to be the tyranny against the majority of people to speak out?" I think that is exactly what we are dealing with here in Estimates.

What we would like to know from the minister is when she is actually going to stand up and defend those organizations and those groups that she is supposed to be here defending. When is she going to actually start doing her job? We have called numerous times for her to bring

forward Bills 29 and 30, two groups that she is supposed to be representing, and she has not done. We have been waiting for a long time to have the Estimates process begin, and that has not taken place either.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The Member for Springfield is talking about Bills 29 and 30. Bills 29 and 30 are not part of the Estimates here. It is not part of Multiculturalism. I would just like to caution the Member for Springfield.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, that is not the case, Mr. Chairman. I am not talking about Bills 29 and 30. I am talking about the fact that the minister does not stand up for the groups and organizations. If she will not stand up for the architects and engineers, which she has not done, why would we ever expect her to stand up for the multicultural communities, which she has also pushed around and tried to get her way with them. That is the issue that we are dealing with right now.

Point of Order

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Chair, I just came in here. I am just wondering if the critic for the minister is making his opening statement here, or what his objective is here. We are dealing with this on a line-to-line basis, as I understand it.

Twice now you have cautioned him to focus himself and try and stick to the process here. We are trying to get through the Estimates process. When that is completed, in due time we will get back to the House and we will be able to address these bills that he is raising. This is the second occasion now that you have had to caution him. I guess I would just encourage him to come to order and deal with the matters at hand right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, for a point of order you might want to point out to the member opposite that you usually cite *Beauchesne's*. That would make it a point of order. He has no point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to just remind people that a point of order is to point out a breach of the rules. I would like to just caution

people to stick to the topic that we are discussing now in Estimates, which is Multiculturalism. So I would just like to caution people to stick to the line that we are discussing now. Thank you.

Mr. Schuler: Excuse me, to your ruling, Mr. Chairman, I mean, who is it that defines what is relevant and what is not relevant to what is being discussed here right now? I am sorry, I happen to think that when we are discussing multiculturalism. We are talking about standing up for individuals, for minorities, and that includes not just these groups, it includes all groups. I think that is very relevant. I do not particularly appreciate the fact that the Chair is starting to decide what is—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. If you would like to challenge the Chair, you are entitled to. Thank you. We will continue now.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: Before I was so ungraciously interrupted by the member opposite, the whole point of having a Minister of Multiculturalism is supposed to have somebody who stands up for, promotes, enhances. It is not supposed to be an individual who cows, who tries to push her own agenda, who tries to push her way on these kinds of groups.

Mr. Chairperson, I would like to point the member opposite and even the minister in the chair, if you look at Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, page 49, there is the objective. Maybe the Chairman would like to read that. It might prove informative, and I think it lays it out very well. It talks about providing advice, administering. It talks about supporting, improving, co-ordinating. Just for all of those here, so they understand, where we are making a correlation here is the fact that the minister has been derelict in her duties in other areas and, frankly, cannot be trusted in these areas because she cannot be trusted in other areas of her portfolio. That is the connection that is being made here, and that there is a very important tie in between what is being paid out and what is being done in multiculturalism and the individual who is supposed to be protecting those rights. She has not done that. Frankly, I would like to hear from the minister if she plans on

standing up for the multicultural community as poorly as she has for the engineers and the architects.

* (15:10)

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Chair, I think that the views of the multicultural community are quite well known. I think they believe, generally speaking, that this Government has done a good job in talking with and reflecting the goals and the objectives of the multiculturalism that are listed in the multiculturalism objectives on page 49 of the Supplementary Estimates. I think that having established the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council, having met with numerous groups, having worked on a number of issues, not only with MEAAC, but with other multicultural groups, that, yes, I could say that this Government has reflected maybe not 100 percent but pretty darn good percentage of the issues that have come before us. I know that the multicultural community believes that they have a minister and a government who are prepared to listen to and talk with and work together with them.

Mr. Schuler: Unfortunately, that was not an answer. The question to the minister was very clearly put. Mr. Chair, how can this minister be trusted in her department of Multiculturalism where frankly it is very important that you have a strong minister, that you have an advocate? In fact, in a lot of instances in the previous government, they went a long way in accommodating the needs of multiculturalism. On June 20, the Premier's (Mr. Doer), her boss's response to all groups, multiculturalism groups, whether they are immigrants, whether they are the engineering, architects groups whether it is parent groups, is: "The minority going to be the tyranny against the majority."

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Could I have your attention. On a point of order, the honourable minister.

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You have admonished the critic on several occasions to discuss the issues of multiculturalism. I think

that the member should be reminded that, under no circumstances, could the definition of multiculturalism or ethnocultural groups be expanded to include the architects and the engineers. So I would suggest that the member focus on the matter at hand instead of discussing extraneous issues.

Mr. Chairperson: On the same point of order, Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Mr. Schuler: Again the minister makes no point, as is her record over the last three years. She has not quoted or cited anything from *Beauchesne*. To be a point of order, she must quote something from *Beauchesne*, and this is a small, little dispute over the facts.

Mr. Chairperson: I would just like to inform everyone here it is a dispute of the facts. I would like to remind everyone to keep to the topic. The topic is Multiculturalism. I thank you.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: If the minister was left with the impression, and we always want to make things simple for the minister, she gets it better that way, that at no point in time was I trying to place the engineers and the architects into the multicultural community, although there may be many individuals who belong to the multicultural community who are architects and engineers, but they are a separate organization. I think it is important that we clarify that for the minister. It is important for her to have that straight in her mind. It is crucial.

The point that I was trying to make, Mr. Chairman, is that as the minister who is supposed to stand up for minority groups, and I quote from page 49 of the Budget documents, "to improve the accessibility, quality and nature of government services as appropriate," and so on and so forth, that applies to all groups.

I would like to ask the minister: Why has she not been consistent in her duties? How can she be trusted on the multiculturalism side when she cannot be trusted with putting forth simple amendments to the engineers and architects acts?

Ms. Barrett: I have answered the multicultural part of that question before, and the other parts

of the member's comments have been ruled out of order, so I am following the rules of the Chairperson, even if the member is not, and am going to answer only questions that refer to the section of the Estimates book that is on hand.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Chairperson, I was wanting to ask a few questions of the minister in regard to her Multiculturalism portfolio and some of the things that pertain to what is happening in that certain sector of her administration.

When last we got together, there was a fair amount of discussion on various aspects of multiculturalism and the outline that the minister was having and which way she was going with it. As she mentioned and as I think all members of the House have mentioned, being part of a Manitoba multicultural mosaic, I think we can all trace our roots back to some sort of involvement with an ethnic group or association within our lineage, if you want to call it, and the fact that so many people have come to Manitoba from other areas that have made Manitoba, Winnipeg, and this province such a great place to live, to work, and to raise a family.

Multiculturalism and the implications of multiculturalism is something that I think we all embrace, one of the things that not only this Government has carried on with but our government carried on with when we were in government. So it is something that I think is recognized as a very, very valuable asset of the milieu of Manitoba. The contribution, the various communities, the various organizations, the cultures, the exposure that each of us have come in contact with, whether it is through some of the events, the functions that we participate in as representatives of government or of the political parties, these are something I think that enrich all our quality of life here in Manitoba, and we are very, very thankful for these things.

So we learn not only from what we are exposed to, but also from the passing on of some of these cultural involvements and their expressions of citizenship that they bring forth in the community. It helps us to understand more in our daily lives and in our inter-reactions and intergovernmental as we are involved with government here in this House in addressing various aspects.

The multiculturalism does bring the aspect to Cabinet, which is where it should be, and the minister is responsible for bringing that type of perspective to decision making when Cabinet discuss various aspects of it. It is not only a Cabinet responsibility, but I would think that it is all members' responsibility to be aware of what the various concerns are in their constituency and in the general population of certain ethno-cultural communities here in Winnipeg or Manitoba. That makes good government; that makes good legislation. It makes the second-sober thought, if you want to call, of decision making in Manitoba because of the designation by, as I say, both governments in recognizing multiculturalism.

* (15:20)

In our particular case, when we were in government we brought forth the multicultural act. I happened to be the legislative assistant to the minister at that time, and I know that there was a great amount of celebration in the various communities by government, being the one to recognize multiculturalism in a degree and a fashion that we did, while we were in government. We appointed a secretariat. There was an outreach into the community through the secretariat, which has been continued by this Government. I think that is very important. It brings forth the ability to again have a direct connection to the community. These are very precise in trying to bring forth decisions and the awareness in government and in their participation with government departments.

I noticed that in the Expected Results, as outlined in the Estimates book, it mentioned citizenship. It mentions other areas where the minister is involved and where the department is involved, and indeed, government is involved in.

There is also reference, and I think we were starting to talk about it just before we broke a while ago for debate on bills, in which we talked about the decoration of the Legislative Building during the festive season that comes at the end of the year.

At that time there were some conversations and discussions in regard to the decoration of the building, the displays, the open house that is

celebrated here and is hosted by the Premier (Mr. Doer). If memory serves me right, it is usually the first Saturday of December when we open up the Legislative Building to all people of Manitoba to come and visit our wonderful Legislative Building. It is beautifully decorated with the various garlands of Christmas and of the season. There is entertainment. There is involvement by the MLAs, involvement by each of the caucuses hosting, various treats and coffee and things like that, of that nature. It truly is an open house in the sense.

One of the things that has always been more or less the centre of attention in the building has been in the main Rotunda, and that is a huge tree. I believe, as has been the practice, that the tree is decorated. It is decorated with various individual ornaments. The ornaments are usually brought to the Legislature by a class or young children from various schools, and they are asked to decorate the tree. I think that it is always a very exciting moment in the Rotunda.

I have had the opportunity to participate in that tree decoration, not only while I was in government, like I mentioned earlier, as legislative assistant to the Minister of Multiculturalism, but also in the last few years when the present minister has been Multiculturalism Minister (Ms. Barrett) and we were invited to participate also with that tree decoration.

The tree is decorated with ornaments that signify and symbolize the various multicultural mosaic. I refer back to that term again, multicultural communities, that come forth with decorations that are unique to their particular culture.

They are all handmade of a nature that is sometimes very, very interesting, sometimes very unique, sometimes very colourful. They all have a very, very significant display when they are put on that tree. They make that tree a very, very beautiful sight. During the open house, which I say is usually in the first part of December, it becomes a focal point. It becomes a symbol of celebration. It becomes a focus for people to look at. They come to see the particular displays. The various ethnic communities come in and around the tree and they point; they will notice their decorations either from their particular culture or someone that they know

from their community that made these displays and put them on the tree. It becomes a very, very focal point during that celebration in early December.

It has been referred to along the lines as a multicultural tree. That is something that has been advertised. In fact, it is even in the, as I mentioned before, it is in the Estimates book on page 50 where it does mention that some of the expected results of the department is to co-ordinate and participate in the multicultural tree and its display. It was put up last year too, and last year it was again very, very beautiful. There were a lot of decorations. There was a lot of participation by the students. I happened to be there again last year when it was done. I had the opportunity to help a few small children up the steps to hang a few of these decorations. To be truthful, I cannot remember exactly which community they were from, but I know that there was a lot of excitement with the children being there and there was a fair amount of pictures taken. I believe the minister participated in a fair amount of the picture taking that was done around the tree with some of the ethnic groups. As I say, there was a real celebration of decoration at that time.

There seemed to be a fair amount of comment that came out of the media at the time in regard to having what we called a multicultural tree in our Rotunda of the building. There was a bit of fervour and a bit of back and forth articles in the paper and everything else like that. There were comments sought out by the media to the minister and to the Government as to whether it was a multicultural tree or was it a Christmas tree. I know it created a bit of a controversy and a bit of a discussion point at that time.

It was the Premier himself, and I wish I had kept the exact quote, but it was something along the line of if it looks like a tree and smells like a tree, it must be a Christmas tree. He renamed it, in a sense, to a Christmas tree. I know there was comment, I certainly do not know the workings of Cabinet like I used to, but I do not know whether there was a discussion in Cabinet as to whether the multicultural tree would not be called a Christmas tree. I noticed that in the Estimates it is referred to as a multicultural tree.

I guess I will ask the minister if this is the approach that we are going to be seeing this festive season that comes up in December, when we decorate the building again. I guess my first question is: Will there be a tree? I am not putting a name on it yet, but will there be a Manitoba white spruce tree in the Rotunda this festive season for open house?

Ms. Barrett: Well, I would like to first thank the member for at least following the Estimates book, unlike his colleague the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), who put his diatribe on the record, and state to the member that it is my information, and I will have to check if my memory is correct, but I think that it was 1989 when the first Manitoba white spruce, I believe it is, was put in the Rotunda. I participated in the Pawley government for a couple of years in the mid-eighties and cannot, and I take responsibility for my failing memory, recall what if anything was in the Rotunda at the festive season in the Legislative Building.

* (15:30)

But I do want to say that the Government will be and is planning for the December open house, which, by the way, if my memory serves me correctly, was first initiated in the early 1980s by the Pawley government. I could be wrong in that, but I kind of remember that. Maybe not. I will ask and if I am wrong I will certainly correct myself on the record. That aside, planning is beginning, and I think I would like to suggest that perhaps the member would like to be surprised in early December when we unveil the decorations of the Legislative Building. I would like to say on the record that, and I think the member will agree with me and all Manitobans who have ever been in this beautiful, wonderful building in the month of December, there is, I would suggest, no more spectacular public edifice than the Manitoba Legislative Building in December of each year.

Things change, they move forward, they evolve, and I think let us just hold on. I know it is interesting and kind of helpful perhaps for us to be talking about the cold, bright, crisp days of December when we are participating in the legislative process and the Estimates process, as we are wont to do in the dog days of late June,

when it is quite warm and muggy in the Chamber and in the committee rooms, as it is right now. But I think I will just ask the member to wait and see.

Mr. Reimer: From the minister's answer, I will assume then that there will be a tree. Hopefully, it is a Manitoba white spruce tree put into the Rotunda in the middle of the room. I will then ask the minister: What will the name of that tree be? Will it be called a Christmas tree or a multicultural tree?

Ms. Barrett: I am not sure how the member made the assumption or from which one of my comments the member assumed that there will be a tree in the Rotunda of the Legislative Building. I think perhaps he should wait with the rest of us with bated breath for less than six months now, not a very long time in the scheme of things, to see what unfolds in the fullness of time.

Mr. Reimer: From that answer then, I can surmise possibly, maybe there was a misprint then in the Estimates book where it does say that part of the results of the multiculturalism is to co-ordinate and/or participate in events such as a multicultural tree and display. So I am of the opinion then, from the minister's answer, that there will not be a multicultural tree on display this year in the Legislature Building or in the Rotunda.

Ms. Barrett: Now the member is going the exact opposite direction. He is now assuming that there not be a tree in the Rotunda of the Legislative Building. I have stated before that plans are underway. We are beginning to think about what we are going to be doing for what has now become a tradition of opening this most beautiful building to the public as a special opening around the festive season, but I think the member would be wise to not make an assumption one way or another.

I might caution the member that the phrase "such as" gives examples of what has happened in the past. It does not require that those events or occurrences or plans take place necessarily in the same format from year to year. It is a general kind of a statement. We may decide to do a number of different things or we may decide to

do more or less what we have done in the past. But I think the member would be wise to just hang in there and wait with the rest of Manitobans, who, I am sure, are at this very moment just dying to know what is going to appear in the Rotunda in early December.

I cannot think of anything of more vital import to the people of Manitoba in the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration than that question, about which there has been an enormous, need I say, maybe I should not say but I will say, an inordinate amount of time spent in these Estimates proceedings, which, of course, is the Opposition's right. They have every right to ask questions that relate to the Estimates of the department about which we are talking. Again, to be fair, the Member for Southdale is actually talking about the Estimates, unlike the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), who chose not to use his time in the most efficacious way possible.

Mr. Reimer: The minister, Mr. Chairperson, has mentioned a few things that naturally open up other areas of concern. It would appear then that the multicultural community may not be able to share in the festivities of decorating a tree this year because of a new direction the minister and the Government are taking in regard to the celebration of the festive season in and around the end of the year, the festive season. The Premier himself has said it is a celebration with the Christmas tree. The minister is saying that it is not a—I should not say that she did not say that it is not a multicultural tree, but she is saying that there is possibly not going to be that type of direction taken for decoration.

I would ask then: Is there going to be a space available for some sort of multicultural inclusion in the festive season, which is usually the first Saturday of December? Have there been discussions with the multicultural community as to what they feel is proper for the celebration during that season?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, as I stated earlier, the Government is beginning its plans, and it is thinking about what will be the elements as part of the open house in early December, or the sharing of this beautiful building with the people of Manitoba in early December. I think it would

be kind of premature for me to say much more than that at this point. We do have a fair amount of time to go before that eventuality comes to fruition.

Mr. Reimer: Then maybe the minister might be able to tell me whether there has been discussion with the new board that has been appointed by the minister with the 21 members, whether they have been asked whether they would like to come up with a different type of area of celebration of the various multicultural communities in Manitoba for that festive season and the open house that is in the Legislative Building during that particular time.

I believe the minister, I should not say I believe, I know the minister has the availability of maybe possibly putting that before the board as an item of discussion as to whether they feel that there should be a multicultural tree on display in the Rotunda to celebrate the festive season, or whether they feel that the area of decision making should be solely done at the Cabinet table, or the caucus, in regard to how the multicultural community is represented at the open house in December.

* (15:40)

The availability of the board, I would think, the 16 members that were appointed by the community and the 5 that were appointed by the minister, should, in all likelihood, have a fairly good pulse of the community, in general, as to how there should be this celebration of multiculturalism. I know we have the ability during Folklorama and we have other areas where various communities celebrate their individuality, but for a coming together of all communities. I would think that the celebration through the open house in December at the Legislative grounds is the opportunity for all communities to come together and to share in their celebrations.

The opportunity, it would sound like, is being changed, and possibly it is because of the conflict between what is called the multicultural tree and what is called the Christmas tree has now come to the point where we say, well, we are going to eliminate both of them, and we will come up with a different display and different celebration for the open house here at the

Legislature which is open to all Manitobans. I just wonder whether this is the way that the Government is looking at it now and the fact that the multicultural community is not being asked to participate in this.

This is a fairly significant change because, as the member mentioned, with the white spruce tree being part of the centre of the Rotunda since, as she mentioned, and I do not really recall when it first came in but if it came in the mid-eighties during the Pawley government, a wonderful suggestion. It has been carried forth throughout the years, and I am just wondering whether this is a decision that possibly the board could look at and have some input as to what they feel is proper, whether it stays as a multicultural tree or a Christmas tree.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, I would again caution the member against making any assumptions as to what will or will not be present as part of the festive season in December in the Legislative Building. I think the member knows, he was a member of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council under the former government and he has always been, to my way of thinking, a very upstanding and forthright and honourable member in all senses of that word. I would just caution him to continue in that regard and not follow in the footsteps, which are less than honourable to my way of thinking, of some members in this Chamber. I would like to also suggest that he follow his own thinking on these issues. But, again, no decision has been made.

I would like to read into the record the purpose of the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council as it is stated in the legislation, and I quote, the purpose of the council is to advocate on behalf of the ethnocultural community in Manitoba and provide information, advice and recommendations to the Government through the minister on all ethnocultural matters in the province, including anti-racism, education, human rights, immigration, settlement and cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage.

I would say that is a pretty strong, pretty heavy agenda for any council to undertake. Those are very, very critical, critical issues. The council is working very hard on a number of

issues at this point. The council has a large degree of autonomy so they not only are asked on occasion by the minister to provide advice, but they are also able to advocate on behalf of the community about issues that are of concern to them.

So, in response, I say the council is doing a great deal of very important work. They have spent some time in this first year structuring themselves, figuring out how it is they want to work together, learning to know each other. There are 21 people, most of whom did not know each other before they were elected or selected to MEAAC. I think they have done a remarkable job in a very short period of time.

So, again, I just would like to end my comments by saying to the member that he should not make assumptions, and he should not put forth theories and ideas without backing them up. I think I would like to suggest that he maintain the degree of integrity that he has shown over the last 12 years in this Chamber and perhaps get on with the issues of import in this Estimates process.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, I hope the member is not feeling that because I am asking questions, that I am being overly critical of the situation because of her being a little sensitive about the questions.

The question was very simple. There seemed to be a conflict. The minister was advertising last year about a multicultural tree. The Premier (Mr. Doer) said it was a Christmas tree. I am only asking that as we come closer and closer to the season whether this is still the same type of conflict. The minister is saying that it is going to be resolved with possibly a new direction. I asked the question, what is the direction? She says, well, wait and see.

I asked whether it should be or has it even been put before the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council because of the change of direction. I do not know yet. I do not know whether that question will be answered.

But, I mean, that is part of the Estimates process. The Estimates process is to ask questions. The questions point out the differences between what is reported in the book and what

was reported by the Premier who has often said the buck stops at his place. So I can only assume that it is not going to be a multicultural tree; it is going to be a Christmas tree because that is what he said. I would think that that is maybe where I will stop on the questions of the Christmas tree.

I did have some other questions unless the minister was wanting to comment.

Ms. Barrett: Just one final comment. Again, I caution the member not to assume anything at this point.

Mr. Reimer: One of the things that I was wanting to ask the minister about is, as I mentioned earlier, when I was involved with the multicultural community as a legislative assistant to the minister and then even when I was a Cabinet minister, I still kept in close touch with a lot of the communities.

There has always been a strong sense of community within certain sectors of various ethno-communities here in Manitoba. Some are very strong advocates. Other ones advocate on a lesser basis.

But one of the groups that has always been fairly strong in the community is the Filipino community. They have been very, very well organized. In fact, I would think we are unique in Canada as we have a federal Cabinet minister that comes from the Filipino community here in Winnipeg. We have members that sit in the Legislative Assembly from the Filipino community, Mr. Chairperson.

* (15:50)

So the Filipino community has always been very strong in its advocacy groups. That is not meant as a derogatory statement when I say advocacy. I am just saying that their presence is well known. They work very, very hard for their community and for Winnipeg and for Manitoba. They are valuable contributors to a lot of the segments of Winnipeg and Manitoba that make Manitoba a place that we enjoy to be from and to live in. They work very hard, not only, like I say, for their own community, but for other groups and other places. They work very hard in the industry, trades, commerce, service industry, all aspects of Manitoba. They are very, very

involved. So it is a very, very recognizable community in Manitoba. I believe, and the minister may correct me, but I believe it is the second-largest concentration of Filipino people in Canada. I may be wrong with that, but I thought that may be the situation.

One of the things I have had the opportunity to be involved with is their various events and functions and celebrations. We have seen a week of celebrations just a while ago celebrating their anniversaries, and the participation has always been very, very high within that community, of involvement. They have also advocated over the years to have their own centre. They do work out of various spots right now, but they have been long advocates of wanting to have their own particular Filipino centre, and they have worked very, very hard with that. They have talked to the City. They have talked to the federal government, and they have talked to the provincial government. It has been a long time, a long trek that they have been on in trying to get the Filipino community centre, if you want to call it, established. Mr. Chair, I understand that they finally secured land off of Burrows, I believe it is, Burrows west of McPhillips, further down maybe from that.

There was a commitment by the City for the land, I believe it was. There was a commitment, from what I understand, from the federal government for some money, and I believe there was a commitment from the provincial government for the money. I am wondering whether the minister could give me an update as to what the status is. What is the overall picture of where, how and when the centre will evolve in regard to the provincial position on it?

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate the question from the member. The Filipino community, I agree with everything the member said about the strength of the Filipino community here in Manitoba. On the specifics, the three levels of government have provided, through the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program, monies to enable the Philippine-Canadian Cultural Centre to come a massive step closer to reality. Last Sunday, as the final event in the celebrations of Philippine Heritage Week, it was the 104th anniversary of Philippine independence on, I think it is, June

16, but the whole of last week was a celebration of Philippine Heritage Week.

On Sunday morning, many members of the community and representatives of all three levels of government gathered at the site of the Philippine-Canadian heritage centre on Kee-watin. In between the Sir William Stephenson Library and the Billy Mosienko Arena is where the City has donated land for the centre. The land was donated quite some time ago. There was a groundbreaking ceremony in the mid-nineties. Unfortunately, it did not move much further than that, but, through the auspices of the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program, the three levels of government came together and have provided funding, and the community has gone a long way to finalizing the rest of the funding that needs to be put in place.

There was talk on Sunday morning of celebrating the 105th anniversary of Philippine Heritage Week in the new centre. So very pleased and proud that this community has been able to put together this centre. Mr. Chairperson, my understanding is that it is the first Filipino community in the country that has been able to work together over a large number of years to bring this kind of centre that is built specifically as a cultural centre to fruition. So very, very pleased, and it was a wonderful celebration on Sunday.

Mr. Reimer: I wonder whether the minister could give me the information in regard to the amount of funding provincially that was provided to the community.

Ms. Barrett: My understanding, and I will, again, make sure I get the specifics because the actual funding comes under the provincial department, Intergovernmental Affairs. So, Mr. Chairperson, with the City, the Intergovernmental Affairs and the federal government, I believe it was \$300,000, \$300,000, \$300,000 from each level of government, plus, of course, the land from the City.

Mr. Reimer: Is the minister fairly confident that that would be the final amount of money that would be dedicated to this community, or have they looked at additional grants through say some of the other programs that are available,

for example, Community Places or other areas that could possibly come into play for additional grants? Is the minister aware of any other grants that the community might be accessing through the provincial government?

Ms. Barrett: Now the Community Places Program is under the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism. I think that is its title; I should know. But my understanding is that most of the Community Places grants are largely for renovations or additions to existing structures. Mr. Chair, I know community centres access the Community Places for additions or renovations, as do schools for play structures and that type of thing.

We worked very closely with the Filipino community on developing their budget and the feasibility of the structure, and we will continue to work very closely with them, but I believe they have not made any application at this point for any additional government funding, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Reimer: I think the minister is also aware that, just as the Filipino community has lobbied for their centre, there have been various other communities that have also done extensive lobbying for pavilions or community centres for their particular areas. I know of a few other multicultural communities that have also looked at wanting to get into setting up their own community centre.

I was just wondering, I know that the India community has also looked at building a pavilion. In fact, if memory serves me right, the property that they have purchased already is very close to my constituency on St. Anne's Road. They are looking at putting up a building in regard to their community in that particular area. They, too, have been aggressively lobbying the various levels of government, the City, the Province and the federal government. I was just wondering: Have there been overtures to the provincial government, through the minister, that she is aware of of any type of funding that would be possibly redirected or directed to the establishment of a pavilion, an India pavilion?

* (16:00)

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I am aware of that particular proposal. There are actually several other community proposals that are in the works. I

have met actually with the group that the member is referring to, and a couple of things that I have said to them, one is—and we have not met. I will admit it has not been fairly recently, but the situation still is applicable—that the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program, a very complicated program I do not pretend to understand at all, but there is only one part of it that is really applicable to cultural centres. The whole program, the whole Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program which is supposed to be a six-year program, I believe, in the first year, there were multiple times applications from groups and organizations throughout the whole range of subgroups in the program that could be accomplished or achieved throughout the whole six years. This is something that always happens. There is a pent-up legitimate demand throughout the whole province under a large different number of umbrella things. So that is one reality.

The other reality that I have talked with the groups about, including this one, and one that I will certainly raise with any group that wants to meet with me, and I am more than willing to meet with any group that wants to talk about these projects, is the whole issue of sustainability. The infrastructure money is for capital only, and then it is incumbent upon the community and the groups that are proposing these capital projects to be able to sustain the operating expenses of these centres. I know that, in my discussions with a Filipino community, the scale of the centre was quite substantially reduced because they recognized, while they are 40 000-plus strong, a very large community, that they wanted to be able to do programming, and they wanted to be able to make use of the centre in an appropriate fashion and not have to spend all of their time fundraising just to maintain the building. So that is another reality that has to be looked at by these groups and is being looked at by these groups. So the short answer is, yes, I am aware of this group. I have met with them. I have not met with them recently, but I am more than willing to meet with any organization that wants to meet with me and share ideas and possibilities.

Mr. Reimer: Thank you very much, and I thank the minister for the answer.

Was there any mention in the meeting with the group, was there any dollar figure put forth

as to what they were looking at in regard to provincial participation if it was approved?

Ms. Barrett: Again, with a caveat that I met with this group a fair bit of time ago and do not have the notes in front of me, but my recollection is that the request in total from the three levels of government would have been approximately \$2 million. Now, again, the groups may have met with the people in Intergovernmental Affairs who are actually dealing with the applications. My recollection again, I am subject to the aging process here, but my recollection is that they did not have, at that point, which was a while ago, a well-developed business plan and scale of the centre. Again, as I talked to them about the questions of, it is one thing to get money to put the building up, bricks and mortar, but it is another thing to be able to maintain the bricks and mortar, No. 1, and to actually do programming, No. 2. So they may have gone far beyond where they were when I met with them.

But these are the kinds of issues that need to be addressed, particularly when the reality is that there is not enough money in the infrastructure program to be able to fund fully or even to a major extent the legitimate requests that are coming before the program. I know, for example, that the Filipino community asked for quite a substantial amount more from each of the three partners in the infrastructure program than they actually received.

Mr. Reimer: The minister has mentioned that there are other community groups that have also come forth with requests. I think that that is a healthy situation in a sense, that we have got communities that are organizing and wanting to showcase their particular areas of their culture and their background and the display of their heritage in various forms. I think that this is something that is of benefit, in a sense, to all Manitobans to share in. I know that the dedication of a lot of the communities is very, very sincere, not only with their volunteer effort but also with their financial contributions towards certain centres or community structures that they feel are appropriate for their community.

I was wondering whether, in particular for the India pavilion, there has been any talk, I know the minister has mentioned the

infrastructure program, but has there been any discussion as to other areas that are available within the provincial government that possibly might look at where funding may be available for this community.

Ms. Barrett: The Canada/Manitoba Infrastructure Program is the infrastructure program that is available at this point in time. That is one of the reasons why it is so heavily oversubscribed, or not subscribed, but that the amount of good legitimate requests that have come in is far more than could be accommodated under the amount of money that is currently available.

There is the Community Places Program, but the Community Places Program, my understanding is it has a maximum of \$50,000, and as I stated earlier, is basically designed for upgrading, updating, expanding existing buildings or, as I said, schools with the play structures, et cetera. The Community Places Program is available for all communities, all kinds of community activities and organizations, whereas the infrastructure program has more specific subcategories involved. I cannot remember the exact title of the subcategory that the ethnocultural community groups are looking at. But that is one part of the infrastructure program.

* (16:10)

There is not a lot of money available; that is the reality. We would like to work, and I am sure that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) and the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Lemieux) and others are working with the City and the federal government to try and determine additional sources of revenue or other programs.

This infrastructure program follows along with the core area initiatives. There have been a series of large-scale initiatives that have been developed in conjunction with the three levels of government. This is the current one. It has a number of years yet to run. It is not to say we will not attempt to talk with the federal government and the City about others, but the reality that groups are facing right now is that the infrastructure pot of money is pretty much the game in town. The chances of community or ethnocultural groups or any groups or projects getting

all or the majority of what they originally ask for are, as one would expect, not that great, problematic. So that is why the groups all need to take a look, a real strong, steady, hard look at their project. Is it doable in phases? Can it be scaled back and added to later? Once we put it up, once the groups put it up, is it operational with the resources of the community, because another issue is that there are not operating funds available in the level to which these groups might need them if the scale is not appropriate.

We have our ethnocultural grants under our department, but that is very, very small, I mean, in the order of five hundred to a couple of thousand dollars, and none of that is for capital. So the reality is that there is not a lot of public funding out there. When I talk with groups, I make those points. I mean, in an ideal world where there was lots of resources, you know, that would be a different situation. I think the communities recognize this and are striving to work within the parameters that they are given.

Mr. Reimer: I wonder whether the minister, I know that she has mentioned that the groups have come forth and lobbied on behalf of their communities for these community centres or centres of concentration to display or to emphasize and to showcase their multicultural heritage, whether she might be able to share with us the other groups that are possibly looking at centres that they are looking for funding from the provincial government.

Ms. Barrett: I think that question would more appropriately be asked of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), who is the lead minister in all of the projects that are coming forward through the infrastructure program. The community projects, the ethnocultural projects, all the other areas, that would be more appropriately asked in the IGA Estimates.

Mr. Reimer: Well, I guess I misinterpreted. I thought the minister at one time said that other community groups were also lobbying for their centres. I thought maybe that that was something that she had a record of or notice of who those communities were.

The department also has mentioned in the book here, processes grant applications for the

Manitoba multicultural community organizations. In the Estimates books here, it looks like the total expenditures for grant assistance is \$107,000. That is the same as it was for last year.

I wonder whether the minister could just give me some background as to how many applications were made, how many were approved, and whether it is available to find out exactly which organizations did get those monies and the amounts that were involved, because I know that there is always a fair amount of draw, if you want to call it, on that particular process. I am sure it is like a lot of them, decisions have to be made as to where the money goes and who gets the grant application approved, if the minister has the availability of figures as to the total amount of applications, the total amount of approvals, and maybe even if it is possible the amounts of monies that were associated with the various approvals and that she might be able to share that with the committee.

Ms. Barrett: The resources that are available to community groups under this program include, as the member rightly points out, \$107,500, but there is also an amount of money available for bingos. Mr. Chair, last year, there were 102 organizations that received the \$107,500 in cash, and then they received \$305,400 in bingos; \$305,400 went to various organizations through bingos, which is an arrangement we have with Manitoba Lotteries.

There were 108 total applications last year, of which 102 were funded. The other 6 were referred to other sources of revenue because sometimes they were arts organizations or they were under community services umbrella. Their application did not fit the criteria for our grants. Now, again, I must say, that 102 organizations going for even, well, \$412,000 in cash and prizes, cash and bingos, the organizations are not going to get the amounts that they requested. But virtually all of them did get some form of financial support. I do not know what happened to the 6 that were referred to other potential funders.

* (16:20)

Mr. Reimer: I am just doing a quick calculation. It would appear then that the 102 organizations

got an average of just over \$4,000 per application. That would include the bingos and the direct grant of \$107,000. Could the minister give me an idea of the high and the low of what was given out? The highest grant and possibly the—

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Sorry for the delay, but I wanted to get the information. The cash ranges from a low of \$200 to a high of \$20,000. Now the \$20,000 is to the Thompson Citizenship Council, and they are kind of an umbrella organization themselves. They have programs that they distribute. Mr. Acting Chairperson, there is a Westman cultural regional grouping as well. They get cash because they do not have access to the bingos, which is through the Lotteries Corporation.

The range basically is most organizations will get between \$500 and \$1,500 cash. Now, the bingos are given out quarterly by Lotteries, and there is a \$1,500 bingo which is for an afternoon, an \$1,800 bingo which is for early evening and a \$3,000 bingo which is—*[interjection]* I apologize. I misinterpreted the information I was given on the timing of the bingos. The afternoon bingo, the first one, is \$1,800. The later-afternoon, early-evening bingo, the middle bingo, is \$1,500, and the evening bingo is \$3,000. Now, groups will get either cash only, bingos only or a combination. It is a complicated process, but you are correct—I would assume because you have the calculator and I do not—that the average would be \$4,000.

The organizations range from very, very large groups that do a lot of programming to quite small groups that have requested money for a very particular specific situation. We do not fund capital out of this because there is not enough money to do that. Any one capital project could take all of the available resources. So we fund operating expenses, and we fund special projects. There is quite a rigorous application form, and the staff does a very good job in balancing, in very much like a Solomon manner, these situations.

The staff works very, very closely with these groups in making sure their applications are as

complete as they can be, that they get the information so that we can give them at least some financial support. I would like to congratulate the staff on that. It is a very difficult job, and they do a wonderful job at it and in working with these organizations in-between times, too, to ensure that they are able to be as viable as possible, because a lot of them, as I am sure the member is well aware, are very small. We have a number of very small communities in the province, and it is important to give them some support. A small amount of money can go a long way if we all work together on this.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am assuming that what the minister is referring to when she says staff, I am thinking that is only the three people, when she talks about the staff who are looking after this end of the Multicultural Secretariat and the other people who are involved with that department.

Going on just a little bit further on the funding, I would assume—and the minister can correct me, that most of the applications for the bingos, would they mostly be within the city of Winnipeg, multicultural groups that would have access to working the bingos, and the grants of approximately \$107,000, would they be going mainly to the rural area where they do not have access to it?

I guess what I am looking at is that the groups in the city are getting access to have bingos allocated to them and the groups out in the rural areas would have the straight grants. Is this an accurate assumption?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Yes, geography plays a role, as it does in everything that we deal with here in Manitoba because of the concentration of population, et cetera, in the Capital Region. The member, being the former Minister of Urban Affairs, would understand the concept of the Capital Region.

Some multicultural, ethnocultural groups from right around the city will be able to access bingos, but the member is correct, that those groups that are generally rural and northern do not have the same access to bingos, so they will

get cash. Because there is about three times, not quite, just about three times the amount of resources available in bingos as there is cash, that is going to skew it. So the vast majority of the bingos go to groups that are within the city of Winnipeg or very close around.

Now, I must mention to the member that the groups do not make application for cash or bingos. I suppose they can ask for it, but they ask for a grant, and then staff determine how much of that grant, if any, will come in the form of cash and/or bingos, the geography, how much they are asking for, the availability. You need to have a critical mass of people prepared to go to work the bingos. There are also some groups who for religious or other reasons do not feel that they could avail themselves of a bingo. So we take cognizance of those issues as well.

* (16:30)

Mr. Reimer: Of the 102 organizations that received either grant assistance or a bingo, would these all different groups, was there 102 different groups or was there an overlap of, say, some groups going back to the application two or three times during the year because the bingos are handed out quarterly? What I am asking is whether there are groups that are getting grants continually throughout the year, or are they only allowed one grant per year or quarter. What are the criteria of application? I guess, looking at 102 organizations, I am just wondering whether there are that many ethnocultural; maybe there are that many ethnocultural communities in Winnipeg. Maybe the minister could clarify that for me.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, lots in that question. No. 1, these are organizations, so there could be and are several organizations representing the same ethnocultural community. So I do not know exactly how many, technically how many different ethnocultural communities are represented in the province, but the organizations are distinct in their applications. So, for example, with over 40 000 members in the Filipino community, you would expect, and of course this is what happens, that there is more than one Filipino organization that makes application. The same thing for the East Indian community, for the German community, for the Sikh

community, for a number of communities there are a number of organizations. We do not have a cap on any organization. I mean, you do not say, well, we are only going to give money to five groups from this particular ethnocultural community. So each individual organization is eligible to make application. They have to be incorporated for at least a year before they can make application.

There are three intakes, April, August and December. Technically, a group could make application for a special project and also make application for an operating grant. I am looking at staff to make sure I am saying this accurately. The vast majority of organizations get either a project grant or an operating grant.

Mr. Reimer: I think the minister answered one of my questions. That is that they do have to be an incorporated entity. As she mentioned, they have to be incorporated for at least a year before making application.

Of the outright grants that go out into the various communities, what type of control or feedback does the department ask for, like, for example, that was mentioned, the Thompson citizen association. Does the department get back an indication of where that money went? I know it goes to that association I guess with the sole purpose of redistributing to other multicultural events or functions or something of that nature. Is there a report that is expected back from these associations that get outright grants?

Ms. Barrett: All organizations are required to submit reports as to what happened to the money that they were given or the bingo or the resources and financial statements for the organization as a whole. I must correct a misapprehension I placed on the record. The Thompson Citizenship Council/Multi Culture Centre does not give out resources per se. They are an umbrella group that has a number of components to it, so a subtle but perhaps important distinction. We do the best that we can to ensure that the money is actually used for the purposes for which it was given. I think the member can recognize why we would require incorporation for a year so that the organization has an opportunity to get its feet wet, to, you know, sort out its by-laws, to get an executive

going, to look at programs and operating expenses. That takes time for any organization to do.

So my sense is that we, the staff and the organizations, have done a very, very good job with our stewardship of this money. As I say, it is not huge, huge amounts, but it makes a difference to these community groups, and they recognize that. They are very responsible in how they provide stewardship for that money.

Also, one of the activities that we have asked the Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council to look at is the whole program of the grants. Do we need to look at the application form? Is there information that is missing or information that we do not need? How do we divide the money? What are the actual needs in the community?

They are in the process of doing a survey to all of the ethnocultural organizations in the province that we know of, asking them about their programs, about their expenses. Do they have a building? Are they renting? Do they meet in people's homes? What kinds of things do they need? Just to get a sense of what the community looks like, what the organizations look like. Maybe our program needs to be revamped to take into account a new reality, or maybe everything is going along pretty well.

So that is one of the things that we have asked MEAAC to do. I think it will be a very important assessment, because it will give us a picture of what the ethnocultural community organizations look like in this province. I think that is something we have not had. We have bits and pieces of it, but there are far more than 102 or 108 community organizations. There are over 400. They are the ones that we are asking information from, Mr. Chairperson.

So I think that is quite exciting. It will give us a good baseline assessment of just what is happening out there and how we can work with the community to improve our programs and their programs and their strength in the community, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Reimer: The minister mentioned the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy

Council. In looking at asking them to look at the process and that, is there possibly a direction that the multicultural department is looking at in regard to the additional mandate of this council in possibly being the assignment of funding or that funding may be allocated through this advocacy council? Right now it is handled, I believe, right through the department, but is there any type of conversation or thought of possibly having the Advisory and—[interjection] MEAAC, yes. Too many anachronisms in this Government, but having them available to be the distributors of the funds or the direction of decision making.

Ms. Barrett: I must say parenthetically that the title of this group I must take responsibility for. That is why I use the acronym MEAAC regularly, because it trips more trippingly off the tongue than saying the whole, entire title.

* (16:40)

But I must say, I wanted all those words in that title because I wanted everyone to know that this was a Manitoba, province-wide, ethnocultural advisory providing advice to the minister but also advocating on behalf of the ethnocultural community, and a council. So I think all of those words, while it is a long title, every single one of those words is critical, and not just because I devised the title.

The issue of who distributes the money, the resources, we talked about this in the two fora that we had before we put in place the MEAAC legislation. The community at that point was quite clear that at least at this point in time they were comfortable with the staff of the Multiculturalism division doing the granting, making the decisions about the granting.

I think, if the member reflects back, I am not sure of how much experience he had with the old intercultural council, which was disbanded, summarily executed, I might say, by the former government, but I will not go there, water under the bridge.

There were challenges, I think I can say without fear of contradiction, because the MIC had the authority to distribute funds. I think the ethnocultural community at this point said at the

beginning of this new process: Let us let government do it now and let us focus on the programming things, let us focus on outreach, let us focus on the issues of human rights and cultural and linguistic diversity and the other in immigration and anti-racism, a huge order for a council to undertake. So far, I believe it has worked.

As I said, the staff have done a remarkable job in working with the ethnocultural community organizations to ensuring that their applications are as complete and as positive as possible. Funding 102 out of 108 applications is, I think, a remarkable achievement due in no small part to the tireless work of, in particular, the Managerial FTE Nadya Kostyshyn Bailey and her staff.

Right now I feel comfortable in saying that MEAAC and the community that they represent would prefer to look at some of the other issues at this time; not to say it will not change maybe over time and we are, as government, open to revisiting it, but I think everyone is pretty comfortable with the way it is now.

Mr. Reimer: In regard to the advisory council, and I apologize, I may have read it in the act itself, but I know that there is a reference to the length of term they can serve. So that is in there, I was just going to ask a question in regard to that.

I know that there has always been the availability of looking forward with multiculturalism and the tremendous asset we have here in Manitoba with the multicultural community and spurring on innovative programs or directions through government as to how multiculturalism can be not only showcased but become part of our Manitoba legacy in a sense—I was wondering whether there has been any type of research or direction that the department is looking at in trying to enhance or showcase or tout the wonderful opportunities here in Manitoba of actually keying, if you want to call it, into the availability of the multicultural community for commerce or for trade or for the utilization of export/import and the accesses that come about because of the diversity of our citizens in this province. Mr. Chair, I was wondering whether this department is looking at trying to spur that on further and utilize this as a

resource for Manitoba in looking at expanding itself globally, if you want to call it, because it seems that nowadays everything is talked about in the global market.

The access that we have to the multicultural community for their background, their experience, their values and their resources that they bring to Manitoba is something that can be a very, very tremendous asset, not only for trade or for contacts or for reaching out into other areas. I was just wondering whether there has been any type of research or discussions in trying to possibly round table the multicultural community into looking at how it can be better utilized in co-operation with government to look at the opportunities that are available. I wonder whether the minister has had any type of outreach into that type of direction in the community.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, there are actually a number of things that are happening throughout government and with the ethnocultural communities and with the business community.

One thing is the Premier's Council, I believe it is the Premier's Council on Economic Co-operation or economic issues. I think of it as the Premier's Council. It has a number of subcommittees that are starting to become very active.

Two of them our department has talked with. One is an immigration subcommittee and the other is economic development subcommittee. The member is quite correct. These are all intertwined. We have an enormous capability here. The central time zone and the fact that we have a fantastic array of languages and very skilled people are an enormous use to us.

Just one example, the service call-centre community is looking very seriously at Winnipeg, because many of these companies are worldwide, they have offices across the world, and the central location of Winnipeg and the number of languages that are spoken here make this a very positive place to put businesses like that, where you can have trained people answering questions 24 hours a day across the world.

Tourism is another thing, more than just Folklorama, which is incredibly important, but we are looking to advance Manitoba as a

destination across the world. You can use the fact that we have people from virtually every country in the world here as a selling point.

Trade missions that have gone across the world have used members of the ethnocultural community here as contacts, as translators. There is a link there. Immigration, well, I am being biased here, but I think the whole immigration area is one that is critically important and one where we are making some major strides.

The business community, in particular the Business Council of Manitoba, has done a lot of good work, Mr. Chair. They are represented on the Premier's council in linking the economic requirements and opportunities here with immigration and with various communities throughout the world. You could say word of mouth too.

People who come here like it. It is more difficult than we would like to have people come to Manitoba, but once they get here they really like it and they stay here. They really, really like it and they stay here. They talk to their friends and their relatives and their communities in their country of origin. The member knows the statistics. We are doing very well in our Provincial Nominee Program. We have a very strong retention rate. So I think all of these areas are very helpful.

So in a nutshell, that is kind of an answer. It is a good question. We are working on a number of fronts, because it is an area that needs a lot of attention from a lot of various departments and groups.

* (16:50)

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chair, I do not think I am asking for anything of Cabinet confidentiality when I ask this question, but, as the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, does the minister sit on any Cabinet committee as the Minister of Multiculturalism?

Ms. Barrett: No, I do not sit on any Cabinet committee as the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, but I do make it my business to inform Cabinet and caucus and other groups too of the impact that policies can have on multiculturalism and the impact multiculturalism can have on policies and programs.

Mr. Reimer: I guess one of the things that I found useful when I was a Cabinet minister, under my various portfolios, is the ministerial conferences that are held from time to time in regard to the various departments that you are involved with. It gives you an opportunity to not only bring forth your views under your Government or our government at the time, but it also gives you the opportunity to talk to other ministers in similar responsibilities.

It is like anything. A lot of these times things are discussed and you come back with new ideas or new directions and things like that. It also helps in looking at new directions that you feel that you may want to be taking your Government or the policies that you have within you, within that department. I was just wondering whether the minister has partaken in any ministerial conferences or ministerial meetings, whether they are here in Winnipeg or anywhere in Canada, with other ministers or with other government officials, in regard to a discussion primarily about multiculturalism and how it is affecting not only, as I say, here in Manitoba, but other areas, and whether she has participated in any of those ministerial conferences?

Ms. Barrett: There is a ministers' conference on immigration scheduled for mid-October here in Winnipeg. It is the first time in, I think, six years that there has been a conference on immigration.

On multiculturalism, I am told that the last time there was a ministers' conference on multiculturalism, Eugene Kostyra was the minister responsible. That would have been middle of the 1980s, prior to 1986, I think in the first term of the Howard Pawley government because I believe that in the second term Judy Wasylycia-Leis was the Minister of Culture. So it was before 1986, and it was held here in Winnipeg. So I would think that we could fairly easily, without fear of contradiction, say that it has not been high on the federal agenda.

I mean, to have a ministers of Immigration meeting only once every six years, or it has been six years from the last one, is not very high priority for the federal government as well. Of course, given our federal system, these ministerial meetings kind of have to be co-ordinated

through the federal ministry. So a good point by the member.

Mr. Reimer: Far be it from me to give direction to the minister on how she should operate her department, but I can relate to her when I was Minister of Housing how we had a very tough time. When I say we, I mean the ministers of Housing right across Canada had a hard time getting any type of response or to get the ear of the minister at that time, federal Minister Gagliano, of coming to the table to talk about housing.

What we did is we initiated a ministers meeting on our own. It was spearheaded by the minister from Ontario. He sent out invitations to all the ministers of Housing at the time, plus an invitation to the Minister of Housing federally, to attend a meeting that was called in Ontario, with the idea of trying to bring to focus and highlight that problem of housing, not only in our particular provinces, but right across Canada. I think what that did was it embarrassed the federal government into realizing that they had to do something about housing. Unfortunately, it was all towards the end of my tenure as Minister of Housing. I think what it did was it woke the federal Minister of Housing to the fact that the ministers out there were wanting something done about the housing problems in Canada, and indirectly we contributed to his changing.

I would suggest that possibly, the Minister of Multiculturalism, this might prove to be a very good opportunity to highlight multiculturalism on a Canadian basis, made-in-Manitoba solution, of trying to send out the invitation or talk to other ministers responsible for multiculturalism right across Canada and see whether there is a willingness to come together on some sort of meeting. Maybe the minister for Manitoba can be the hostess of this event, and it will bring to the forefront a lot of the things in regard to multiculturalism. This could be the start of a new renaissance of multiculturalism in Canada, made in Manitoba, coming forth by the Minister of Multiculturalism, as suggested by her critic.

Ms. Barrett: I have a very brief time to answer. I think that is a great idea. I think multiculturalism has not been dealt with enough, and I

certainly will take that suggestion under advisement.

Mr. Reimer: I will get the final word in here. Well, I believe that that is a great suggestion that I brought forth to the minister. I am sure I have all the confidence in the world that she will take this forth with utmost speed and haste and vigour to her Cabinet colleagues, her caucus. I noticed her caucus, most of them around the table here today, are very intently listening to this. So I think that we do have something that possibly she can take forth on our behalf as legislators here in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., the committee rise.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

* (15:00)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now be considering the Estimates of the Department of Education, Training and Youth. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, I do. It is quite a lengthy one, and I could go on for 40 minutes, but I think it would be a disservice to the critic. So maybe what I can do, in lieu of the statement that I had prepared, is just briefly review some of the challenges and accomplishments of the department after two and a half years in office in a very brief way so as not to take up too much of the time available to us in Estimates. It may be the best idea just to deal with this in a perfunctory way.

I think, first and foremost, I would be remiss if I did not say how proud I am personally to be associated with the professionals that comprise the Department of Education, Training and Youth. I know that my predecessors, I am certain, feel the same way. The Department of Education and Training as it was formerly known and currently Education, Training and Youth is comprised of individuals who, in my estimation and my experience, are second to

none in terms of the dedication and commitment they bring to the task of providing educational excellence in the province of Manitoba day in and day out. I feel very humble and have a great deal of humility each and every day when I meet with staff of the department, as I do on a regular basis every day, in whatever capacity that staff serves. I know that they have served honestly, with integrity and with dedication governments, successive governments, this Doer government, the previous Filmon administration, the previous Pawley administration before that, the Lyon administration previous to that, the Schreyer administration and administrations that go back to the founding of this province.

I would be remiss, I think, if I did not start my remarks with how proud I am to serve with those professionals in the department, and I think I speak for members opposite during their time in office as well, that governments, successive governments have been very, very well served, and Manitobans have been very, very well served by the dedicated professionals that labour day in and day out in the Department of Education, Training and Youth.

I also would like to comment just very briefly on how proud I am to be working with educators, trustees, administrators, parents, communities, and children in the public school system. Yesterday I was in Beausejour, in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, turning sod for a new elementary school in Beausejour. At that event, numerous individuals came up to me and discussed with me the partnership that has been developed, particularly on that individual project, the creation of the elementary school, but more broadly with the new Sunrise School Division that is emerging in eastern Manitoba, the partnership that has evolved between the provincial government, school divisions, trustees obviously, and communities. The Beausejour Elementary School is a sterling example of that partnership.

The Municipality of Brokenhead and the Town of Beausejour were instrumental in working with the Public Schools Finance Board and the school division of Agassiz, soon to be known as the Sunrise School Division, with its amalgamation with Springfield and in the future Pine Falls and other areas of eastern Manitoba;

how that partnership created, in a meaningful way, the new elementary school that is now taking shape in Beausejour. The Municipality of Brokenhead and the Town of Beausejour were instrumental in providing property for the site of the new school. We will be assuming at some point in the future the portion of the existing elementary school that will remain standing. A good part of that school will be demolished. It is infested with mould, and there are health considerations and health concerns around that particular building.

But there is a real partnership that has evolved in eastern Manitoba between municipalities and the town of Beausejour and the School Division of Agassiz, as I said soon to be Sunrise, about building not only public education in that part of the province, but building the community in that part of the province. So I am very privileged to be working with so many dedicated Manitobans in building educational excellence throughout the province, and yesterday in Beausejour was just anecdotally an example of that.

* (15:10)

Finally, I am also proud and privileged to be working with members opposite and working from the foundation that was built by my predecessors in preceding governments. I know that when the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was my critic on the post-secondary side a couple of years ago in Estimates, we had a long dialogue on the programs that were set up by the previous administration and which have been continued and built upon by this administration.

I know that is a feature whenever governments change that the succeeding administration has an opportunity to build upon the successes and build upon the initiatives of the preceding administration, sometimes change and eliminate programs but, more often than not, build upon programs that preceding administrations have put into place during their time in office.

That certainly was the case, anecdotally as I am recalling back, around the leadership role taken by the Filmon administration in terms of the expansion of technical and high-tech computer assisted programs in the public school

system, and there was some tremendously good work done with Campus Manitoba, for example, that has been built upon in the past two years.

So in the place of opening remarks outlining accomplishments and outlining different areas, I think it would be sufficient just to again say how proud and privileged I am to be working with so many dedicated Manitobans at every level in building educational excellence in the province and how much humility I have in this office as minister working with these Manitobans, because they do offer to me as minister and offer to the department broadly advice and counsel that really is second to none. I would be remiss if I did not thank them and give my heartfelt appreciation to them in these opening remarks.

So, with that, Madam Chairperson, I think that being able to touch upon five or six goals that provide a strategic direction which is shared with advanced education would be the way to conclude. These strategies if I could just quickly touch upon them: First and foremost, of course, in the public school sector is the K to Senior 4 agenda for student success which outlines six priorities and more than 25 specific action plans to build upon student success in our public school system. The agenda has been developed with the field, with trustees, teachers, parent councils, superintendents, business officials and students as well as communities and other interested parties, the faculties of Education for example, over the last two and a half years, and that agenda is now informing all of the activities of the Department of Education, Training and Youth.

The second is the Manitoba Training Strategy which outlines the areas of attention to strengthen adult education and training in the province. The third, of course, is the post-secondary education strategy, which outlines a variety of actions and commitments which Minister McGifford will speak of in her Estimates; fourth, the Aboriginal Education and Training Framework, which highlights the importance of integrating Aboriginal issues into all areas of education, again this is shared with Minister McGifford; a five-year capital plan through the Public Schools Finance Board to address the capital infrastructure of our public school system in the some-700 schools that

comprise that system; and the MERLIN business plan for computer technology in our public school system.

Within these strategies, the department is making a particular effort to meet all of the 1999 commitments that we made to the electorate and which formed the mandate of Education, Training and Youth in the province of Manitoba.

So with those remarks, those words of thanks in appreciation to those that we work with on a daily basis and a quick outline of the strategic direction of the department, I will turn the table over to Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member from Minnedosa, have any opening statements, comments?

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Madam Chairperson, yes, I do have some opening comments. Let me start by saying I look forward to the hours and days we spend in here reviewing the work of the minister and getting a better understanding of the Department of Education.

In my time in the Legislature, I never had the opportunity to work with this department other than through Cabinet decisions and Treasury Board decisions. But I want to say I join with the minister generally in recognizing staff not only in the Department of Education but right across government who are truly a professional civil service, as they should be. They are here to toil for Manitobans from one government to the next, and provide that continuity that happens within government as governments change and ministers come and go for whatever reason. It is always an interesting time when the civil service does brief a new minister.

I want to take the opportunity in going through this Estimates process to truly get a better understanding of some of the issues that are in this department before the education community and that are of concern to students, to parents, to parent councils, trustees, administrators and, indeed, the general public. I recognize the important role that a department

like the Department of Education plays within our society.

I can tell you from meeting with school boards and others across the province, they certainly have a file of letters, directives, policy statements, information sent by the Department of Education. They are the ones that are in the field. The department staff are in the field to work with all of the partners in education. I believe that the thrust of the professional civil service is to provide for students the best possible education that they can. So I, too, would salute the members of the Department of Education and all civil servants in the tremendous work they do in this province.

I think the essence of the success of any department is to work in partnership with the different groups that the department interacts with. There is always a good feeling when all of the members of the education community indeed feel that partnership. That is not always the case. As decisions are being made, legislation is brought forward, there are from time to time people who feel that they have been left out of the process, or are in some way aggrieved by the direction that government is going. I am always amazed that the feeling that is out there, the little power that they have to make their feelings known. But I have always encouraged members of the public, school boards, or whatever department it is to put their thoughts in writing and have assured them that there is a process in government when a minister receives a letter on a particular subject. In all likelihood, within days an acknowledgement goes out. I know that most departments try within three weeks to have a response to that. It is sometimes not understood out there that that letter can be a very powerful thing because it does, if it is well written, bring to the attention of the department and the minister concerns that are out there.

* (15:20)

So I look forward to getting to know the minister and his staff better and understanding the issues that are before the department. I can tell you there are a number of issues that I would like to talk about during our meetings here. One of the things that has been brought out by letter and by phone call more and more is the

Commission on Class Size and Composition and the desire by school boards in particular to know and understand where this initiative is going, and we will have some questions around that.

There is also, perhaps, some concern and a little bit of confusion sometimes on the issue of standards testing. People often may be confused with standardized testing and do not understand the need and the importance of setting standards and having mechanisms to test to see how individuals are doing in terms of meeting that standard.

We want to talk about school boundaries, and we have a chance to do that in the legislative process, but I think you get a better understanding of some of those issues here, as well as adult education issues. I am interested in the Special Ed Report, which I believe was received by government in 1999. I know that in the '99 Budget, some \$2 million was put in to try and develop some of the strategies and initiatives within the Special Ed Report. I suspect that many of those issues and concerns are still out there and would like to get a better understanding of where the Government is going with that.

The funding formula, probably one of the most misunderstood formulas that government deals with, is of great interest to taxpayers, to municipal corporations and to school divisions. I can recall the time when I was a teacher and involved with the Manitoba Teachers' Society in one way or another, we would talk about the funding formula. It has had some changes over the years, but again, to try to explain that formula to the layperson is almost impossible. When funding announcements are made and reference is made to the funding formula, if you make a net gain in the amount of resources that you are being assigned, you may speak kindly of the funding formula. On the other hand, if your division is one of the losers, you question the funding formula and the ministry and the department. It is a very difficult concept for people to get their heads around because the whole idea of a funding formula is to try and offer to school divisions some assurance that this formula is an attempt to level the playing field out there. I know the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, as well as the municipal councillors have

worked towards changes in that funding formula, and I would be interested in spending a little time on that.

The Grade 3 assessment, probably an issue that is brought up within schools more than many other issues because I think this assessment was intended to replace a Grade 3 standards test, which was not popular out there; this, too, is suffering that same fate. I think teachers and administrators and boards are finding it rather intrusive at the front end of the year and have some concerns about maybe perhaps making that more of a streamlined process.

So those are some of the things that I have on my mind and look forward to discussing them as we move through this Estimates package.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the critic from the Official Opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last thing considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 16.1.(a) Minister's Salary, and proceed with consideration of the remaining items under Resolution 16.1 Administration and Finance.

At this time, I invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, I would like to introduce Dr. Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education, Training and Youth, and Claude Fortier from the department who has been invaluable in the preparation of the Estimates package that we will be reviewing here today. Again, I feel very privileged to work with both these gentlemen.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The first item for consideration then is 16.1.(b) Executive Support. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, welcome to the staff. I am wondering if the minister would be able to table an org chart of the department so that I could have a better

understanding of where people fit into the scheme of things.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, I am just reviewing the book and there is an org chart on page 11 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I thank the minister for that. In my haste to get in here, I did not have a chance to look at that thoroughly, so I thank you for that.

In this section of Executive Support, I see there are nine staff years. I trust I am reading this correctly. These things sometimes are a little baffling. So the managerial staff year is the deputy, I presume? Professional/Technical, is that the political staff in the department, and then the rest are admin support or secretarial? Is that correct?

* (15:30)

Mr. Caldwell: That is correct. It is the deputy staff and the deputy secretaries and my secretaries as well. Political staff are part of that, I am being advised here right now. So that is accurate.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is wondering if I understood your answer, and I think I did.

Mr. Caldwell: I can go through them here. Diana McClymont is the administrative secretary to the deputy; Ben Levin, obviously, is deputy minister. Nicole LaRoche is executive assistant to the deputy. Yolande Choiselat, who is no longer with us, but her position has been as administrative assistant, remains in the deputy's office.

Pearl Domienik, the administrative secretary to the minister, who is capable beyond all belief, I might add, and I am very, very grateful to have Pearl in the office as have been a number of ministers who have taken me aside over the years. I think the first one to do it was Frank Johnson at a Robbie Burns night, who took me aside shortly after being appointed minister and said he understood that Pearl Domienik was my secretary and he attested that she was the best person he had ever worked for or with in government. So Pearl is a tremendous resource as a civil servant.

Debbie Milani, administrative secretary. Jamie Skinner, special assistant to the minister and Annalea Mitchell, executive assistant to the minister are the two political staff in the office. Finally, Melissa Bodman who is the administrative secretary who works with Debbie and Pearl in the front office. Those comprise the nine. Yes, that is it.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I did not get all those names down, but your special assistant is Jamie Skinner?

Mr. Caldwell: The special assistant is Annalea Mitchell.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mitchell.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes. She is lingering at the back of the committee room as we speak. Jamie Skinner is my executive assistant who assists me as well.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The line shows three Professional/Technical. The third person there is an assistant to the deputy, I would presume?

Mr. Caldwell: The deputy advises me he is sure that that is right. He is not entirely certain who that is in terms of the nine names that I gave, but that is accurate.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So it is accurate to conclude that you have two political staff, an EA and an SA that report to you. You do not have any other political staff in the Department of Education, or can I ask whether there are other political staff assigned to you through any other agency or group that you are involved with or the Government is involved with?

Mr. Caldwell: These two political staff are the only ones that I have. There are no others assigned to me. Obviously, from time to time, we deal with other ministers, political staff and so forth, the policy management group and so forth, but the only political staff that I have working for me are the two, Jamie Skinner and Annalea Mitchell.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I might say I did have the occasion to phone your office once to talk to your special assistant. I forget what the issue

was, but I did receive good service, and I pass my thanks along to her for that.

On top of this, you will have an MLA's allowance. That does not show in the Estimates, but, presumably, you may have staff attached to your office, say in Brandon, through the MLA's allowance?

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, I do have the constituency assistant. Margaret Black is my constituency assistant in Brandon as per my MLA budget.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The salaries then that are reported here are as per the general manual of administration as it reflects on political staff, deputies and other staff. These are covered in that general manual of administration, I presume?

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Gilleshammer: In the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review under Activity Identification, and this is the Executive, but I suppose more specifically the deputy is there to provide policy and program implementation advice to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education, Training and Youth and the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford); to provide policy direction for the incorporation into the planning program and/or policy implementation and evaluation functions of Manitoba's education and training systems.

I presume in that role that the deputy is there to give you advice on all of the initiatives that you have undertaken throughout your two and a half years as Minister of Education, and that the department, as a whole, reports through the deputy and that the advice, the information, the direction that Government is taking basically comes from that source. Is that correct?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, the deputy is obviously invaluable in providing policy advice and certainly invaluable in terms of program implementation, ensuring the smooth implementation of policy through the civil service.

But it would be giving the deputy too much credit, although he is deserving of all the credit that he does get, because he is a fabulous

resource in the office, and I have quite grown to love the man, actually our policy advice in the department, we have made it a point of pride, I suppose, but also a point of commitment to develop policy based upon, broadly, advice that we receive from the field.

The deputy and myself have been in hundreds of schools in the province over the last two and a half years. We are in the field extensively, virtually on a daily basis, one or the other of us or one of our assistant deputies. We try and develop policy based upon the feedback and consultations that are undertaken in the field.

So, while Doctor Levin certainly is important in providing policy advice, he is certainly not the sole source of that advice, I do not think, nor would he want to be. I think Doctor Levin himself has made it a hallmark of his management style to undertake very much a team approach to policy development, and that has informed our thinking, in terms of policy development in the department for the last two and half years. Would that be fair to say? *[interjection]* Okay.

* (15:40)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Now, can I also ask, then, is there a parallel process, or another process whereby the minister gets policy advice?

Mr. Caldwell: Policy advice, as I said, comes from all sources, I suppose. I seek policy advice virtually with every meeting that I undertake.

For example, earlier today we met with the executive of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and we are seeking advice on a number of issues with MAST. Yesterday I made reference to the sod turning in Beausejour, and the groups of individuals that were speaking to me in Beausejour, all of whom offered advice on a number of issues.

I know it is not, perhaps, typical of management practices to be so diffuse in terms of the developing of policy or seeking policy advice. But people in the field, and individuals in the field, after two and a half years, feel no compunction about approaching me and offering advice and opinions and views on virtually every

area of undertaking in the department, and how that gets filtered out, and how we have discussions about that in departments of policy advice, works its way into policy, occurs through regular meetings that are undertaken in my office between myself, the deputy, assistant deputies, executive directors, so we can distil that information that we gathered from being in the field.

But policy advice and policy development in the Department of Education, Training and Youth over the last couple of years have been a process of distilling in the main what we hear in the field, and distilling that in the minister's office by virtue of a fairly free-ranging discussion between senior management and myself, and then moving forward with policy based upon that advice that comes from the field.

Primarily, in the main, we have also obviously floated ideas and in the field, for example, the discussion around the school calendar year, we have floated ideas and had an ad hoc committee functioning for a little over a year with representatives from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Manitoba Teachers' Society to directly give us advice on how to manage the school calendar year. So there are formalized processes as well. But, in the main, it has been very much an approach to policy development that is fundamentally informed by our ongoing consultations, or ongoing discussions, or ongoing visits to schools and with school trustees, divisions, teachers, their associations, parent councils, superintendents and so forth.

So it is an approach that may not be typical or traditional, but it is an approach that we feel builds a sense of collegiality, not only in the Department of Education and Training, but a sense of collegiality in the education community broadly.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I understand fully and completely what the minister is saying. My question was, though: Is there another organization within central government that provides policy advice to the ministry?

Mr. Caldwell: There is, in the sense of Cabinet and caucus, but it is in the same context of what I have just described in terms of the field.

We do have a caucus of educators, largely comprised of educators. I see two fellow MLAs who are here today, Dr. Linda Asper and Stan Struthers on the government side of the House—oh, I am sorry, the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper) and the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers). The Member for Riel is a former educator, and the Member for Dauphin-Roblin is a former principal, as is the critic, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer). So there is no dearth of policy advice directed towards the minister from his Cabinet and caucus colleagues. So we do have the same opportunities or the same provisions for giving policy advice that exists in the field, really exists within government, as well.

There is some assistance that is given in terms of assisting in policy and review of policy issues, and that would be Executive Council and Cabinet, as well as Treasury Board and Cabinet committee staff who review policy initiatives that we may put forward and are involved as we develop policy in clarifying, I guess, our thinking around whatever policy issue it may be and how manageable those policy issues may be as they are developed that assist in clarifying or refining our policy ideas.

But, in terms of the development of policy, it really takes place as a consequence of the sort of advice we are getting in the field and, as I said, within caucus, particularly, because we do have a very keen group of individuals who have very strong views and articulate views on public education.

Again, it is likely not the traditional way of developing policy, but it is one that reinforces collegiality and is one that is very much team-oriented.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think all governments have paid staff who are there to generate policy, whether they are called the planning and priorities group. I am not sure what they are referred to within your Government.

I would ask where the staff years for those people are housed. Is it in Executive Council, or is it in another part of government? I just, out of interest, wonder where these staff are accounted for.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, I do not really know where others may be housed in terms of whom they are responsible to. I do know that in Executive Council there is one individual that we see from time to time, Ron Desjardins, who offers some feedback on policy. He is under Executive Council, so I assume that would be, well, perhaps I should not assume anything, but it is somebody else's responsibility for that individual.

But in terms of policy advice in my office for educational issues from a political perspective, Annalea Mitchell would be the only one of those two who is involved in policy.

Mr. Gilleshammer: One of the avenues open to the minister, of course, is to farm some of this out to a commission, and I would like to just ask a few questions on the Commission on Class Size and Composition that was headed up by Doctor Nicholls.

I think the report was given to the minister back in May sometime, and I am wondering what the next step with that report is.

Mr. Caldwell: The Commission on Class Size, and I do not have the exact date either, but initially it was May. I have distributed that report widely through the field. It is also on the department's Web site, so we can entertain wide feedback on the report that Dr. Glenn Nicholls undertook, the Commission on Class Size and Composition.

The report itself is one of the few documents in Canada, and certainly the most contemporary document in Canada, that deals with the issue of class size and composition. Doctor Nicholls undertook months of consultations, public hearings throughout the province to draft his report. There were some thousands of participants that gave Doctor Nicholls feedback. Given the wide-ranging interest in this issue and the wide participation in that exercise, in Doctor Nicholls' exercise, there were some 550 schools participating out of the 700 schools in the province and representatives from those schools.

* (15:50)

It was a very, very popular commission to make representation to. When I received the report initially in May, I thought it prudent to

allow the field to have a good thorough review of the conclusions of Doctor Nicholls, to allow the field an opportunity to analyze and understand the narrative and the conclusions of the report and provide time for those thousands of people who participated in the commission; allowed those individuals and groups time to have reflection and time to be able to provide the minister and myself with their thoughts on the narrative and the conclusion of the Nicholls report. That is where we are at with this document now.

The field has had it for approximately five weeks, six weeks. It has been on the Web site for about that length of time. I am receiving commentary from the field even as we speak.

Mr. Gilleshammer: My information, and I think it is correct, was that the commission report was tabled on May 7. We also have to be mindful of Bill 42, which was passed last year. It spoke to the question of arbitration and whether there could be arbitration for class size and composition. The bill that was passed into law indicated that within six months of the receipt of this report it would automatically become an area that could be arbitrated.

Now am I correct in my understanding that you would have to bring in legislation this session or in a much earlier fall session than we are used to to mitigate Bill 42, to allow the arbitration process not to include class size and composition? Is that a correct understanding?

Mr. Caldwell: Yes. That is correct.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The minister, who indicated he met with the trustees association yesterday or this morning, probably has had discussions with them over class size and composition. While I am getting copied on many of the letters to the minister on a variety of subjects, probably the area that is at the top of their agenda right now, and they see an immediate concern with, is what direction the minister is going to go on this. I did hear the minister when he said that it is on the Web site. This has been sent out to the people who make contributions to the commission as we are nearing perhaps the end of this session. If the Government holds true to form and does not

come back into session until late November, the opportunity to have that legislation in place gets rather limited.

What processes still have to take place before the minister is prepared to announce a decision on that? I know when the commission report was presented on May 7, I believe the press release said that there would a more fulsome response to the report in short order. I am wondering if the minister can indicate where that is at?

Mr. Caldwell: I am still receiving feedback on the class size commission report. We have had a few provincial organizations. I think three have submitted, again, I am going off the top of my head, but I think there are three submissions that have been forwarded to the office thus far. I am not sure if that is accurate or not, but there certainly has been more than one and less than five. There have been a number of communications made to me in a verbal way, in my travels throughout the province, visiting schools and so forth.

I expect there will be some thoughtful responses to the Nicholls report, the Commission on Class Size and Composition report, yet to come in. I am cognizant of the fact that, as I said, there were thousands of participants in the commission's hearings and in the process of getting public representation around the issue of class size and composition by Doctor Nicholls when he undertook his commission. So I am respectful of the fact that probably many, many, many of those individuals or groups are still in the process of formulating their views and their responses to the class size commission report.

We have had a couple of discussions in my office around the class size commission report, not specifically as an independent agenda item, but as part of our review of our ongoing number of issues that are before the department. We have not had a dedicated meeting on the commission report, awaiting some further feedback from the field to inform our own discussion within government.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, is it fair to categorize the issue by saying there are two very polarized forces at work here. You have got the trustees'

association and I have been copied on letters just recently from Seine River, Evergreen and others that I did not bring along, adamantly saying they respect the report. They respect the fact that there was a three-year moratorium suggested by Doctor Nicholls, and the trustees basically want to see this remain as a management responsibility.

The other side of the case is teachers very much want to have go to arbitration the whole idea of class size and composition. So you have two polarized groups, and I think the forces out there are lining up on one side or the other. Is there any other group with a different point of view on this?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, those are the two, I guess, poles of the debate. It is important to note that arbitrators have been quite conservative in dealing with issues of working conditions. When they have been asked to arbitrate on those issues in the public education system there has been, Manitoba in fact has probably, of the Canadian provinces, fewer working condition provisions for the public school system than perhaps any other province. But I think the member is quite right in saying that the two poles are represented by, on one hand, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and, on the other hand, by the Manitoba Teachers' Society. There are views in between those poles, but the two main provincial organizations, management on one side and labour on the other side, do have quite divergent views on this matter.

* (16:00)

Mr. Gilleshammer: So the minister is in a position where he is going to have to come down on one side of this or the other. But I think Doctor Nicholls gave you a compromise position, too, in that school boards, teachers' associations, can work on this issue for the next three years and put the moratorium in place, and we will see what happens. Basically, I think, you know, teachers, and, I once did a little negotiating myself, are very much aware of the importance of arbitration and that when a new concept is included in a contract somewhere, whether by arbitration or through negotiations, it becomes a standard across the province, and it would soon be accepted. I fully understand that

the teachers know that but boards know that as well. I sort of believe the minister maybe has already made a decision on this and that he does not need a whole lot of time or consultation to bring forward a decision on this, and I think that, given the time of the year, given the time of the session that we are in, he should make a commitment one way or the other. I would ask him if he would do that today.

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I fully expect that there will be more legislation brought in from my department this session. But in terms of this issue, I have not made my mind up on it. There are, obviously, competing forces that are seeking their position, and we have outlined the two major ones in the province, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Manitoba Teachers' Society. The member is quite right in that Doctor Nicholls provides for a third option that could be described as the middle road on the issue, that a moratorium be put into place for a period of time and that other work be undertaken during that period of the moratorium.

But I have not taken anything to Cabinet in this regard yet. I have been discussing the issue with the two provincial associations and others who have raised it with me in the field, and the member has referenced some letters from school boards, certainly that is occurring. School boards are sending notes to me on this matter, as are teachers associations and so forth. But there has not been anything taken forth subsequent to the tabling of the commission of class size, the Nicholls report to the House in early May, and, at the same time period, the sharing of that report with Cabinet and caucus.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would like to ask the minister whether a commitment or promise has been made to teachers organizations that this will become part of the bargaining package, either in the near future or three years hence, or whether in fact that decision has not been made.

Mr. Caldwell: I have not made any promises to anybody on this particular issue. It is an issue that has generated a lot of interest over the years. The whole issue, as the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) may be aware, previous to 1997, I think it was, was bargainable. '96, I guess, was bargainable.

There were provisions in 1996. It was a bill passed by the previous administration outlining management rights for collective bargaining that the former administration passed in that '96, '97 period. I cannot remember the number of the bill right now, but arbitration for class size, ability to pay, there were some other provisions that were part of that legislation which was passed by the previous administration that obviously was perceived in a negative light by the teaching profession, by the Manitoba Teachers' Society in particular.

There was a commitment pre-election to deal with that legislation. That was dealt with, I believe, in the second session of this new Government in the form of Bill 42, I believe, was the number of the bill that dealt with collective bargaining for teachers.

So, I mean, the Nicholls Commission arose from that session and that bill, whereby we put a part of that legislation that we would undertake a Commission on Class Size and Composition to get a more thorough understanding of this issue and what it means in today's educational milieu.

The Nicholls report was tabled in the House in early May, as the member has indicated, May 7, I think he referred to, or May 6. That report has now been posted on the Web sites. We have posted it on the Web sites for some time, and broadly shared with the field and with those hundreds and thousands of individuals and groups who participated in the public hearings. I expect that we will have a decision on this matter sometime in the near future, but that time has not come yet.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The minister indicated that he had not made a promise to the teachers that this would become an issue which they could arbitrate. Could I ask if the Premier (Mr. Doer) had made this commitment on behalf of the party prior to the last election?

Mr. Caldwell: The Premier would be the best person to answer that question. I know that the collective bargaining legislation, Bill 42, that was part and parcel of the second session of this new Government, dealt with that commitment that was made, as I recall. But the Premier would likely be the best person to ask about

commitments that he may or may not have made.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The minister is referring me to the Premier, of course, who is not with us today. Is the minister aware of whether a commitment had been made?

Mr. Caldwell: The commitment that I am aware of was the repeal, I think, of Bill 72. I am not sure of the restriction on free collective bargaining that was put into place by the Filmon government, I think it was Bill 72. I am not certain right now because it is before my time here. It was in the '96, '97 period. But there was a commitment by the Premier that we would repeal the restrictions placed upon collective bargaining for teachers by the Filmon government. Bill 42 is my response to that commitment.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Does he regard that as a full response or a partial response to that commitment?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I regard it as a full response.

Mr. Gilleshammer: There are no outstanding responses necessary or promises that need to be kept on that issue of arbitration, of class size and composition?

Mr. Caldwell: Again, on the issue of class size and composition, the Nicholls report was tabled in early May. The report is being shared widely with the field. I am getting responses back from that sharing. We will see in due course what that results in, but the time for that decision is not here or now. It will depend, I suppose, on discussions that are taking place now outside of this building and will take place inside this building at the point in time when I take my recommendations, or submission if I have no recommendations, for further discussion to Cabinet and caucus.

Bill 42, in my view, dealt with the substantive issues around teacher collective bargaining. The issue of class size and composition, which is something that was presumably bargainable up until 1996-97, and which was removed as a bargainable item by the previous

government, was deemed to be of sufficient importance and sufficient complexity to undertake a commission in 2000, when Bill 42 passed restoring teachers' bargaining rights.

* (16:10)

The commission, as I said, reported earlier this spring, in early May. I am now receiving feedback from the field on that particular issue. At some point in the future I will collate that advice and prepare a paper for discussion in Cabinet and caucus around the issue. It is difficult to, I guess, hypothesize as to what the views are in the field around the totality of the meaning of the commitment to repeal Bill 72 encompasses. But my sense is that, from where I sit, Bill 42 dealt with the substantive issues raised by the removal of collective bargaining rights that was a consequence of Bill 72.

How the class size and composition issue is dealt with remains to be seen, but I think it is safe to say, or appropriate to say, that the Nicholls Commission is the most thorough report on this issue in Canada, and provides tremendous insight into the complexity of class size and composition in our province and is instructive in its advice. That is the sort of feedback I am getting from the field, too. Most, if not all of the people who have responded to my request for feedback, have indicated that they felt the document was a very thorough, very thoughtful and very timely analysis of the issue of class size and composition in Manitoba that can have a broader impact for other provinces use as well.

It is the most up-to-date and thorough document in Canada right now on this issue. I am very pleased that Manitoba has undertaken a leadership role in assessing the complex issue of class size and composition. I am very grateful to Doctor Nicholls for undertaking such an exhaustive report, and, directly, I am very, very grateful to the thousands of people who participated in his process to get their views on the issue of class size and composition.

But what ultimately transpires with regard to that report and what decisions are ultimately made on the issue of class size and composition is not for today, and it is not for this Estimates process. It is for some point in the future when

full feedback has been received from the field and when Cabinet and caucus have had an opportunity to review that advice and come to some decisions based upon, I suppose, as is always the case, the best interests of the public school system.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Is the minister aware that one of the partners of his in education, the trustees' association, believes that in discussions with the Premier (Mr. Doer) that he more or less said to them that, yes, we have a commitment to proceed with this? Their expectation is that you will be allowing the class size and composition to be arbitrated.

Mr. Caldwell: No, I am not aware of any discussions that the Premier has had with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees in this matter.

Again, it would be best to ask the Premier about conversations he has had with others or about commitments that he has made with regard to any matter that the Premier has views upon. But I am certainly not aware of any statements he has made to MAST in this regard.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So the minister maintains that he is not aware that promises have been made. He is indicating that a decision has not yet been made on this matter, that in due course he will be bringing in more legislation which may or may not attend to class size and composition. He is now almost two months into having received the report, and he is aware the clock is ticking.

There are grave concerns out there, I am sure, on the part of teachers that this be achieved sooner rather than later and on the part of trustees that this decision at least be made for the next three years and allow time for the system to address some of these issues.

Is that a fair analysis of where the minister is at?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I would not entirely concede with that characterization as a whole. I think what I have said is that the Premier is the best person to talk to about statements that he made.

The department itself is very pleased. I personally am very pleased with the thoughtful nature of the Nicholls report and very grateful to Doctor Nicholls for undertaking such a wide-ranging assessment of class size and composition in the province.

I am certainly very appreciative of the thousands of individuals who made themselves available to Doctor Nicholls to share their perspectives on the issue of class size and composition. I am continuing to make the report available and to seek feedback on the report from those interested individuals and interested parties who both participated in the public hearing process and who may not have participated in the public hearing process but may have a desire to make representation to the department on the Nicholls report.

I am speaking on behalf of myself as the Minister of Education, Training and Youth. The Premier may have his views, as do other colleagues, I expect, even at this table that we are sitting at today. I do not think that any of our two political parties in this House is a monolith, but it will be a collective decision made by the Government, and it will be made in due course. It will be made based upon the best advice that we receive from the field and our best judgment on what is in the best interests of the public school system.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Thank you for your responses on that issue, Mr. Minister. I may return to that at a later point when I may require more advice.

I have a number of letters that you have written to school boards and others: July 10, 2000; September 25, 2000; and January 9, 2001. All of them have to do with school division amalgamation. As late as January of last year, you talk about being genuinely committed to a voluntary process in these deliberations. Certainly that is the tenor of all of these letters. It follows, I suppose, what the Premier (Mr. Doer) said when he met with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees that he was committed to a voluntary amalgamation, it was the Manitoba way, I believe. Your letters are consistent with that. There are a number of times you are quoted in various local papers in Russell, Brandon and

others where you were committed to a voluntary form of amalgamation. When did this change to the point where these were handed down, and we went into a forced amalgamation rather than a voluntary one?

Mr. Caldwell: I remained optimistic from, I guess, the first announcement that we were going to be dusting off the Norrie report which was in either October or November of 1999. I was sworn in as minister on October 4. There were a number of items of business, but one of the first was reviewing business left over from the previous administration. One of those pieces of leftover business was the Norrie report. It took me a couple of days to get copies of the report brought in from wherever they were. They were not in my office when I arrived there, but I did get some copies of the Norrie report.

At my—I was going to say at my leisure but that is the wrong word to use because there has not been much leisure in this job since my appointment. When I had available time I took it home, had an opportunity to read the report, discussed it with my good friend Earl Bachman in Brandon, who was the executive secretary of the commission. We had a chance to have a couple of chats about the report, discussed the report with others in a casual way and made, I guess, an announcement. I guess I would call that an announcement today. At the time I just made the casual observation that I was going to have a look at the report, which generated quite a bit of media attention at the time and quite a bit of attention in the field. We did make a commitment shortly after to reduce the number of school divisions and reduce the costs subsequently associated with administering the public schools system in the province of Manitoba for the October 2002 elections.

At the time, and as the Member for Minnedosa outlines, up until fairly recently, certainly within the last year, the preference towards voluntary merger was repeatedly stated in the media and publicly, but I have to say that it was also stated that the Government was determined to reduce the administration of our public schools and redirect resources, educational dollars and educational resources, from the boardroom to the classroom in the province. The point where the voluntary merges of which

there are a number of divisions in the province right now who are in a voluntary mode: Intermountain School Division, the Rhineland and Boundary school divisions, Prairie Spirit and Mountain.

There are a number of divisions that, as part of this process, have undertaken a completely voluntary merger. There are a number of other divisions in the province where one partner or the other was in a voluntary mode, and I think of Midland, White Horse Plain, for example, as well as others in the province where there was one dance partner but not a second. Then there are some others where both partners were directed to merge.

* (16:20)

The member asked at what time did the shift take place from the expectation of voluntary mergers to some direction has to be provided for mergers. I would state that that took place in the month or two preceding November of 2001, because there was a strong desire and a strong indication from the field that a year was required to do the work necessary to prepare for the October 28, 2002, school division and municipal elections.

So as a consequence of the work that needed to be done, we had to make an announcement a year in advance. This is the advice that we got from the field, because a year would give sufficient time to accommodate the work that needed to be done to prepare for the October 2002 elections.

So if there was a shift in terms of the language that was used from voluntary amalgamation to more directed amalgamation, it was in the period immediately preceding the announcement, so notionally October, November 2001. November 2001 is when we made the announcement indicating which divisions would be merged. As I said, a proportion of those were voluntary. Another proportion of those had one of the two partners seeking a voluntary merger, and then there were a number that were both directed.

But it was a year notionally, and that was to be able to provide the time necessary to do the work, to undertake a successful amalgamation.

Mr. Gilleshammer: In July 2000, less than two years ago, July 10, 2000, your letter says: I think we have a window of opportunity over the next couple of years to work together, to come up with changes in division structures.

Obviously, you closed that window a little sooner on them, that you did not allow for the two years of co-operation to come up with the new structures, but rather it was closer to one year, and then you brought in the forced amalgamations.

So divisions and trustees and the players in education were a little miffed by that, because they felt that they were working co-operatively and that there were incentives that could be put in place for that to happen. So it is not surprising that divisions and trustees were a little taken aback by this, because it was contrary to what you stated in your letter of July 2000.

Mr. Caldwell: I guess it is not surprising, but I have a bit of a difference of perspective on that particular point, because we continue to work with divisions in the modernization of the public school system in the province.

I continue to have meetings with divisions who are amalgamating. We continue to provide facilitation services through the person of David Church to amalgamating divisions. The Province has continued to provide resources in terms of \$50 per student to amalgamating divisions. Today, or last night, the River East, Transcona, Springfield, Agassiz school divisions concluded their shared service agreement to guarantee access to programs in the city of Winnipeg for students from eastern Manitoba, the municipality of Springfield particularly. So today, in fact, part of the conversation that I had with the Association of School Trustees was to facilitate mergers and amalgamations.

So we continue to work with school divisions, with communities, in facilitating the modernization process and will continue to do so for some years after the end of October 2002 when the new boards will be elected.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

In terms of the voluntary to directed amalgamations, that took place approximately six months ago, where there was direction provided. But even at that, that advice was given to us by trustees who said, look, we need a year to do this. We would like some direction on what is being envisaged for 2003. So while the environment in which our work together may have altered for some divisions, because, as I said, divisions are involuntarily merging, other divisions have one voluntary partner and others are directed completely. We have never stopped working with divisions, assisting them financially with resources, assisting them through facilitation and direction and advice. Again, as recently as four hours ago now, three hours ago now, when I was meeting with the MAST executive, and last night a very significant action, again, in the new River East-Transcona School Division concluded a shared service agreement with the Agassiz School Division to guarantee students access to programs that they have been accustomed to having.

So while the environment may have altered somewhat, the work that we undertake together has not changed at all. In fact, in the last little while it has increased in pace.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Can the minister indicate what date the new divisions were announced?

Mr. Caldwell: I have in my mind November 6; in the deputy's mind, November 8; and my legislative assistant, the Member for St. Vital (Ms. Asper), November 9. I have just sent out Ms. Mitchell to get my personal briefing book that I write my own notes to. So it will come back. But notionally, in my recollection, November 6; and the deputy's, November 8; and the Member for St. Vital's, November 9. So we can safely say the end of the first week, beginning of the second week of November.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, a little while ago in a previous answer the minister indicated that the shift in policy from voluntary amalgamation to compulsory or forced amalgamation that that shift in thinking happened six months ago. Yet the new division structure was announced eight months ago. So I suggest to you that this must have happened at least a year ago, if not earlier.

Mr. Caldwell: I am counting back on my fingers—May, April, March, February, January, December, six months. It would more accurately be seven months.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So the policy shift, Madam Chairperson, the policy decision to go from a voluntary amalgamation to a compulsory one was made at the same time the new divisions were announced, or was that policy decision made some months before then?

* (16:30)

Mr. Caldwell: It certainly was not made some months before then. It was made in the same environment that the announcement was made. The decision, the discussion around how we were going to proceed, in my recollection, was taken to Cabinet in the week or two before the formal announcement, the formal announcement being made on November 6, 7, 8 or 9 of 2001. The decision of Cabinet would have been either the week before or the week before that.

There was a gradual realization, obviously, leading up to the announcement that some divisions were not going to be moving forward voluntarily. There was obviously a preference to move forward voluntarily in totality. We have, as I said, a number of divisions that did take that course, a number of divisions that one division, but not the other, took that course, and some were directed; but it was clear that many divisions had not taken the issue seriously.

It was also clear that from the advice that we were receiving from the field that it was imperative that a year's time be allocated to undertake the work necessary to provide for a smooth transition from two or three divisions to one new division. But the decision proper was made literally immediately preceding the announcement in early November 2001.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I certainly accept the minister at his word on this because the product that you came up with sort of would indicate that there was not a lot of thought put into this and that it was done in a very hasty fashion.

If the minister is saying the decision was made or announced on November 6, and the

decision to go ahead with the forced amalgamation was made in the same environment, presumably the month of October or September, it certainly explains the product that the minister came up with and announced. I am wondering if he could indicate what sort of advice he got from his deputy at that time.

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I do not think the Member for Minnedosa is playing very nice now. I think that this debate has been going on in Manitoba since 1993, so to say that there is somehow something hasty about this kind of flies in the face of objective reality that most Manitobans that I speak to on this matter are quite familiar with.

The Norrie Commission, which toured the province in the mid-nineties, made recommendations in the mid-nineties or early nineties, as the case may be, '93, '94, and then lingered for quite some time, six years before the change in government, and then two and a half years since the change in government.

I mean, I appreciate the comments and I quite smile at this. This is the minister from Minnedosa, because we are in this political arena, and we want to criticize each other for actions taken by either my party or his. This has not been something that is new in Manitoba. In fact, it is something that has lingered rather long in Manitoba and certainly far longer than it lingered in other provinces in Canada.

Having said that, the member is accurate in his recounting of how the decision was made in terms of the time lines. We did put into place a process for the first year and a half of our mandate, 18 months, notionally, whereby we encouraged divisions to analyze their situation, enter into discussions with their neighbouring divisions and provide us with advice on how best to create greater administrative efficiencies, and as I said, divert resources from the boardroom to the classroom across the province. We did have, as a consequence of that, a number of voluntary amalgamations undertaken, and they are proceeding today.

We had a number of situations where one school division wanted to partner with another, but only one division was in a voluntary mode,

and then we had others where there was no effort made to undertake efficiencies of this nature. At that point, as we neared the year preceding the 2002 election, there was considerable representation made to myself, to my colleagues in the field, that it was time that the Government made a decision and an announcement on the amalgamation issue so that this year could be used to do the work required to provide for a smooth transition from a previously existing structure, one or two divisions or two or three divisions, to a new structure, the new division.

But once the Government made a decision to amalgamate, the deputy's job was to make sure it happened effectively and expeditiously, and this comes back to the question about how the deputy felt about this issue. His job was to make sure it happened effectively and expeditiously and his advice was sought on how to make it happen and how to best accomplish the goal. I do not want to put Doctor Levin in a situation that I do not think it is appropriate to put him in or to comment on the specifics of the deputy's advice.

It is also, I think, important to point out the decision to proceed in Alberta and Ontario was made very quickly. It was implemented even more quickly than we are undertaking in Manitoba. Those amalgamations, in those two jurisdictions, amalgamations that were undertaken by Conservative governments in those two jurisdictions, had far less consultation and far less input from the field than anything we collectively undertook in the province of Manitoba.

So we continue as a government to work with divisions. As I said, as recently as a few hours ago in my office, we were meeting with the Association of School Trustees in this manner. I note that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is here now. She may know already, but she may not. As recently as last night, the two divisions, River East, Transcona, Agassiz school divisions concluded their shared service agreement to provide for stability in the public schools system and provide for students that are currently taking programs available to them in the River East School Division to continue access to those programs.

So trustees around the province have been working very diligently on this file, not only for this year for those divisions that are undertaking the amalgamation but for the last eight years in terms of the Norrie report, in terms of the recommendations of the Norrie report and then more aggressively and more actively in the last two and a half years when post the announcement in November 1999 that we were dusting off the Norrie report with a view to changing the constellation of school divisions in the province for the October 2002 elections. Some of those were directed, some of those were voluntary, and some of those were a mix of voluntary and directed, but in each and every case the trustees of the province of Manitoba have been working diligently and professionally, with integrity and with my full support and appreciation to ensure that students are the beneficiaries of this exercise.

So I take the member's point that the ultimate decision was made in the context of the year in advance of the October 2002 election, but let us not mistake having decisions made to allow for a year's work to be done, but let us not confuse that with the fact that this issue has been before the people of Manitoba for the better part of a decade.

Mr. Gilleshammer: But the minister still maintains that the decision to move from a voluntary amalgamation to a forced amalgamation occurred in October or November, and then the announcement was made on November 6 or 7 or whatever. That is his position?

* (16:40)

Mr. Caldwell: Yes. I am just trying to get the exact date for the member, but the decision was made immediately preceding the announcement when we had the consultation of divisions that we had a vision for 2002 elections. We made an announcement. There was a gradual realization over the period preceding the announcement in November, a gradual realization in government that a strictly voluntary approach to this issue would not provide the results that we were seeking. We were seeking a balanced and moderate approach to school division amalgamation as the members will recall.

The Norrie Commission recommended a reduction for 54 divisions to 21. The announce-

ment in November 2001 was reduction from 54 divisions to 37. We had hoped that an entirely voluntary approach would work, and I maintained that hope virtually until the 11th hour. In fact, we did, I think, have a great many divisions, in fact a great many divisions did undertake a voluntary approach, but there were those that did not. It was clear that we were not going to have an entirely voluntary approach in the months leading up to the announcement in November 2001.

There was obviously a lot of contact with the department and the field in the months leading up to the announcement. We had a couple of divisions that joined on and in fact even post announcement in terms of voluntary Intermountain School Division in the Parklands region came on in a voluntary basis around the same time of the announcement and, as I recall, it was post the announcement. But we wanted to build upon the voluntary amalgamations that were being undertaken, but also move beyond that in a meaningful way. What we finally resolved at the end of the process of the voluntary phase was somewhat less, not draconian, but somewhat less comprehensive than the 54 to 21 divisions or 22 divisions recommended by Norrie, but one that achieved approximately a one-third reduction of the number of administrations in rural Manitoba, a one-third reduction notionally in the city of Winnipeg and a one-third reduction in administrations in northern Manitoba.

So it was a very balanced approach, a moderate approach, one that built upon the voluntary initiatives undertaken by school divisions around the province but one which also, in a meaningful way, made administrative efficiencies, a redirection of administrative resources from management to educational purposes, manageable for the field.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, appearing on the March 15 docket of 1994 for the Norrie Commission was the man who sits to your left, and he said at that time: Changing boundaries will neither save significant amounts of money nor improve students' learning experience but will involve substantial costs in time and energy. I

think your deputy had it right that there is not substantial savings here, and it is taking substantial costs in time and energy. There is not any evidence of improvement of learning experiences. I am wondering if you have had the opportunity to read the document that he presented to the Norrie Commission on March 15, 1994.

Mr. Caldwell: I read the Norrie report. I have read some material from Doctor Levin in other sources. I expect that some of the sources he used were similar to the sources he used in the Norrie report. I know the deputy is referred to in the Norrie report.

But there is no monopoly on wisdom in regard to this particular issue. I certainly am not right all the time. I expect that Doctor Levin would suggest that he is not right all the time, and the truth likely lies somewhere in-between for all of us.

I can say that divisions around the province and particularly those who have undertaken amalgamation recently, the Prairie Spirit School Division, which is the former Tiger Hills and Pembina Valley, and the St. Boniface School Division, formerly Norwood-St. Boniface have realized tremendous opportunities as a consequence of the mergers that were undertaken in the late nineties.

In fact, my visits to Prairie Spirit School Division, of which I have had a number, particularly early in my term as minister, reinforced very strongly to me the benefits of amalgamation. There virtually was not a person whom I spoke to in any of the communities or schools that I visited in the Prairie Spirit School Division who perceived amalgamation to be anything but positive for the kids in the public school systems in the communities of Pilot Mound, Crystal City and the other communities in central Manitoba, such to the degree that Mountain School Division is now voluntarily merging with the existing Prairie Spirit School Division. So in that part of the province three school divisions will be one by this time next year; in fact, by the end of October this year.

So while there are very many divergent views on many, many issues in public

education—it is one of the areas where everybody has a strong opinion—I do not think that amalgamation can be perceived as anything but beneficial, in the Manitoba context at least, to students. That has been the experience of the divisions that merged previously. I have newspaper clippings in front of me, one in the *Winnipeg Free Press* entitled "Merger a net gain for school division"; "Red River students will finally be wired as a result of their amalgamation with the Morris-Macdonald School Division."

In Springfield, I have something from the *Clipper* here: "Amalgamation has much to offer," talking about the program enhancements and program opportunities that are available through partnership with the Agassiz School Division.

You know, it is a terrible position to put the deputy in, in terms of views that he expressed to the Norrie Commission eight or nine years ago. I know that we have had fairly rigorous discussions around this issue, and Doctor Levin's views have informed my perceptions of this issue quite profoundly as we have moved forward with it. Certainly I think we would have a far different creature without Doctor Levin's views.

Quite frankly, I agree with Doctor Levin 100 percent in terms of his assessment of the Norrie Commission's findings, because Norrie essentially threw out all school boundaries and had a massive reorganization of school divisions in the province. We look at Winnipeg. Norrie made a map of Winnipeg and divided it into quarters. It had no reflection on current school division boundaries, no reflection on collective agreements that were negotiated between different school divisions, and it is complex to even merge or harmonize two collective agreements between two divisions merging in totality together, but when you start fracturing school divisions up based upon boundaries that do not recognize current division boundaries, you end up in quite a different scenario than when you are amalgamating two discreet entities together.

The situations have also changed considerably since 1994. Rural divisions have significantly smaller enrolments and populations than they had in 1994. Financial pressures are

obviously substantially greater than they were in 1994. We have had a number of years, as the member knows, of substantial cuts to provincial support for the public education system. Rural depopulation continues. That trend has not been reversed. It continues. In fact, in *Prairie Spirit*, one of the largest gains that they have seen in terms of amalgamation is the morale and enthusiasm that are generated around building something new and enhancing numbers, gaining numbers by merging.

So a school division with 500 students and a school division with 500 students coming together to create a new division of 1000 students, and the opportunities for teachers for professional development and the opportunities for students to gain from programs that one division may have and another division does not have are tremendous.

* (16:50)

The criticisms that the deputy had in 1994 that I read in the Norrie report and have read in other articles that the deputy has written around this issue and around the public schools finance and public schools administration, generally, in the main, I found myself agreeing with. But the exercise that is being undertaken in terms of the mapping and the boundary changes in this exercise of amalgamation vis-à-vis what was undertaken with Norrie are substantially different: 37 divisions versus 21, using division boundaries as our model as opposed to municipal boundaries. Looking at existing realities in the city of Winnipeg as opposed to dividing the city up in quarters are very different realities in terms of the Norrie report.

The end result, fewer school divisions, and the end result, a redirection of educational dollars from administrative purposes to educational purposes, are the same. Many of the recommendations of the Norrie report, including the first one—Norrie stresses that it is desirable to have the department and government take a leadership role in education, going to the ward system in school divisions, moving from a ward system to at-large representation. Many, many recommendations of Norrie are very positive and have found their way into this legislation and informed this legislation, as does the Norrie

report inform this discussion in Manitoba, as it has since 1994, but there are many differences in what is being undertaken in 2001-2002 with this amalgamation and the Norrie report. So maybe I will just leave it at that for now.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, the minister sort of weaves a rather confusing tale here about amalgamation. On the one hand, he has led us to believe in the last months that he has embraced that Norrie report, that he has an autographed copy of it, that he has read it thoroughly, and it was the basis for the changes that were made to the boundaries last November, but, on the other hand, much has changed since the Norrie report came through, according to the minister.

The comments that his deputy made in 1994 were perhaps relevant then but they are not relevant now. The fact is that he is distancing himself from the Norrie report in the boundaries that he announced in November. In fact, if you look at the Norrie report you might even see some symmetry in here, that you have four Winnipeg school divisions of approximately equal size. You have a number of rural school divisions of approximate size, 4000 or 5000 or 6000 people. I think he achieved some symmetry. Then you look at this map that was put out I think rather hastily on November 6 or whatever, and it bears no resemblance to the Norrie report.

So the minister cannot have it both ways. He cannot embrace the report and say it was his guiding light, that he took instruction from it, and that when the product is completely different than what Norrie put forward. But I want to go back to the costs. The minister is on record as saying that there are \$10 million worth of savings in this forced amalgamation, and we are hearing the exact opposite. We are hearing school divisions coming forward talking about the costs. I think Mr. Levin was right when he said that changing boundaries will neither save significant amounts of money nor improve students' learning experience but will involve substantial costs in time and energy.

The minister must have had some way of coming up with that \$10 million. I would ask him if he can quantify it? For instance, well, let

us use St. Vital and St. Boniface, who are talking about millions of dollars in cost here. How much in his mind did he think the system was going to be saved by the amalgamation of St. Vital and St. Boniface?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I will deal with the first part of the member's comments first. Norrie fundamentally did inform my thinking on school division modernization. I think the Norrie report was a very useful document. If the member reviews the recommendations in the Norrie report, of which there are dozens, the member will discover that many of those, if not the majority, find their way into this legislation.

I guess the fundamental difference or divergence in what is before the House now and what was presented to the Filmon administration with Norrie was that Norrie envisioned 100% change in the boundaries of the province of Manitoba school division boundaries. Every area of the province was undertaking structural change. Every division was seeing itself impacted in the province. Every public school, every trustee, would be engaged in an amalgamation exercise in his or her jurisdiction. The number of collective agreements that would be impacted would have been 100 percent, every collective agreement in the province, many of them being fractured up 12 ways to Tuesday.

What we are undertaking in the province right now is much more modest, impacting notionally 55 to 60 percent of the province. It is also much more modest in that the collective agreements that will have to be addressed are far fewer and consistent with the existing boundaries as opposed to, as I said, a situation where you had collective agreements being fractured six ways to Tuesday.

So, Madam Chairperson, commissions are undertaken to advise government and provide government with advice on how to proceed. I do not know of anything in the Department of Education and Training historically, where something has been recommended by a commission and undertaken with 100% truth or 100% adherence to those recommendations. They are that; they are recommendations.

The majority of recommendations of Norrie, in fact, I would suggest all of the

recommendations had an impact on my thinking, including those recommendations that we decided not to pursue. That would have been the 100% restructuring of the school divisions in the province of Manitoba and the division of school division boundaries without any respect to the existing boundaries, but more with respect to municipal boundaries in the case of Norrie, or in the case of Winnipeg, making quadrants.

So our approach is much more modest and much more sensitive to the realities that school trustees were going to have to undertake in making these changes, much more sensitive to realities of collective agreements, realities of existing trade routes, existing communities of interest and so forth.

Some have criticized us obviously for not going far enough. That is a criticism I hear weekly, that we did not go far enough.

As the member may know, Winnipeg will have six school divisions, six or seven school divisions, six school divisions at the end of this exercise. Other major cities in Canada—Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, and so forth—have one public school division in the province. Winnipeg and Manitoba still will have many divisions. I think that is appropriate, because having locally elected officials to make decisions at a local level and community level is important. That is one of the reasons Winnipeg will have a number of divisions post-October 23, 2002. We are not conforming with one big urban division that characterizes other jurisdictions in Canada. For that we are getting, and I am getting, criticized. I accept that criticism, but my view is there is value in having school divisions at a local level that have manageable responsibilities.

I guess we are winding up. On the remarks that I cannot have it both ways, I do not want to have it both ways. I think it is appropriate to be instructed and guided by the Norrie Commission and by the report of Bill Norrie. It is a useful document. It has provided many recommendations which we are following. I mention the ward system as being but one. That is the third recommendation in the Norrie report. I think it is a valuable recommendation. The first recommendation is that the department provide leadership, and certainly that is what we are doing in this exercise.

There are other areas of Norrie I disagreed with. The map of the school division boundaries without respect to existing division boundaries was one where I thought Norrie was flawed. So we have used it as a starting point for this exercise. It is a valuable starting point. The previous government was wise to undertake the Norrie report. Where the previous government erred was not taking that report forward and undertaking what this Government is doing, that is using it as a basis for action to reduce administrative costs in the public school system and redirect administrative dollars to educational purposes.

I guess, with that, we are getting to 20 seconds before private members' hour. I can speak for a moment now to the question that followed the preamble by the member. We will, as a government, continue to work with divisions, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' Business. Committee rise.

JUSTICE

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Justice. Would the minister's staff please now enter the Chamber.

We are on page 117 of the Estimates book, resolution 4.1.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Chairman, I am waiting on some books to be delivered here to assist me with this process. Would the minister humour me by telling me what is included in this section so that we can get the clock rolling.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): There has been a wide-open question and answer. We went through the organizational chart for the department, then there were just some general questions. There were some undertakings which we have available, at least in part now. I see the critic has arrived now. Maybe this is your lucky day, Glen.

So that was the context. It was a global approach to the Estimates.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): I had something that I wanted to follow up on in Question Period. I asked the Attorney General, in April 2000 Mr. Deveryn Ross contacted the Minister of Justice's office to express concerns about questionable conduct by departmental and Justice staff related specifically to his case.

I asked the minister: Can the minister advise what action he undertook to investigate the validity of Mr. Ross's claims? The answer to that was basically no answer. Could the Attorney General please give some background?

You know, as Justice critic you get many letters. I am sure you are well aware of the fact that many people contact the office and talk about the challenges that are there, the challenges that they have. I would like to question the Attorney General if he is aware of this case and what has been done to investigate Mr. Ross's claims?

* (15:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: When the question was asked yesterday, I know staff began to look into the records. I expect within days we can have a full report to me on the background of this.

What I understand is that it was a criminal case matter, which, of course, then would not be dealt with at the political level because of any perception of political interference with Prosecutions or with a judicial decision, but my understanding is that there was an allegation of a wrongful conviction, I believe was the information passed on to me this morning.

My understanding was that through I believe it was a staff of Education, I do not know if that was because it was an MLA in Brandon, if this person is from Brandon or not, but information had been passed on that the individual should pursue, if he wanted to pursue the allegation, a section 690 procedure under the Criminal Code, which of course involves the federal government, on section 690. I believe it will be renumbered 696, the procedure where one has an allegation of wrongful conviction. It is a federal process.

I believe that was relayed to the individual, I understand, and the relaying of that information was also passed back to one of the staff in my office. But that is all that I was advised so far. I know that the department will look at the background of this case.

Perhaps we can deal with this through the Estimates, because I suspect that the Speaker will be cutting me off if I tried to answer that kind of a question in Question Period, or, perhaps, if we are out of Estimates, I can pass that on in writing to the member so there can be an accounting of what follow-up took place to that person's complaint or call.

Mrs. Smith: So the Attorney General, that is the first that you were aware of this particular case, when I asked it in Question Period. So that is why the Attorney General was unable to answer the question and you needed to have some time to get some background on it. Is that what I am hearing?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that is right.

Mrs. Smith: It is my understanding that situations cannot be talked about if they are actually in court, and it was my understanding there is no court case now at all. Am I incorrect in that?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am not aware if there are any ongoing proceedings or not and I am not aware whether there was correspondence that may have come to my attention. I am just saying I have no recollection of that individual's name or the circumstances there.

I understand there had been involvement by the special assistant in my office, by an assistant to, I believe, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell). Whether that was because of Brandon or because of a connection to that individual, I do not know. I believe there was involvement with the department. Yes, there was departmental involvement as well, but I will await the full information. I think, to be fair, I should be given information in terms of how that matter was dealt with.

When it comes to individual complaints about criminal matters, as I said earlier, if it involves a matter of general policy direction that

is a political matter and would be brought to my attention for a change of policy, a consideration of options, or otherwise. By and large, I think it has been the practice in the department and in the office, when it comes to individual issues about a criminal case, that is dealt with by the professionals in the department.

In this case the early information I had was there was a referral to the federal process which would not engage further provincial involvement, but there may be other aspects to the case I have not been advised of yet. This is premature for me to comment on whether I am accurately setting out the full context of the matter or not, but I am just telling the member what I had heard this morning as a result of her question yesterday.

I can say from time to time there are concerns about prosecutions and decisions from the bench. Of course, the usual way of having that dealt with is by way of appeal in the courts. It is not only inappropriate for a minister to get involved in that process, except to the extent of perhaps passing on information from Prosecutions, but there are in place in the country criminal processes under the federal criminal code which give people avenues to pursue. If this individual, perhaps the member might want to help me here, if the individual was alleging there was a wrongful conviction, there is one process. That is the process under the Criminal Code. The Province does not have involvement in that one.

I know the federal process has changed somewhat lately and in fact strengthened. The earlier process the federal government had in place under the Criminal Code had been subject to a lot of criticism as not being independent enough or resourced enough in terms of the role vis-à-vis the federal Justice Minister's office. Now that has been strengthened. I know the deputy in Manitoba had some role to play in helping to fashion options and progress towards a stronger federal system to deal with allegations of wrongful conviction.

They do come in from time to time. I have heard them myself. People have come up to me. In fact, once I was at Stony Mountain. I think there were two or three individuals who said

they were wrongfully convicted and should not be in there. My response, of course, always must be that there is a process in place. The politicians of the country, perhaps even involving politicians at the provincial levels, have been involved in putting in place that process. Then the process has to unfold without political interference.

That is my understanding of what this individual's concern may have essentially been, but, as I say, I do think it is premature for me to comment at length on the steps that have been taken in my office, or in the deputy's office, or the department.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Attorney General please elaborate about the policy of his department? What happens when concerns are expressed about questionable conduct by departmental and Justice staff, whether rightly so or wrongly so, but if an outside party does come in and say there are concerns, what is the policy at the present time that the Attorney General has to address that?

Mr. Mackintosh: I think when it comes to impropriety on the part of any public servant, a number of—

An Honourable Member: Alleged impropriety.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, allegations of impropriety. There are a number of options available for a complainant. The Ombudsman, of course, is an office that has been established since the early '70s to investigate impartially and report publicly on the improper conduct of public officials or improper application of public policy. The Civil Service Commission is another option, and of course, if there are any allegations of criminality, there would certainly be the option available to a citizen to complain to the police. In terms of impropriety in respect of a lawyer, the Law Society is there to deal with those kinds of complaints.

So those are I think some of the main areas of redress for someone that is concerned about the proper conduct of public servants or lawyers that are in the public service specifically.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Smith: It is my understanding from some of the Attorney General's past comments that in

the event that there are any concerns about questionable conduct by any of the Justice staff or people close to himself, is it not the policy of any Attorney General to just take it out at arm's length to have it examined, or is there another policy in place?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first, there is a policy that the department has when a member of the Justice Department may become involved in allegations of criminality or may be charged or may have a record, and we could provide that set out in a brochure, as I recall. I think there has been some demonstrated leadership by putting together that document in consultation with the Civil Service Commission—when was that done? *[interjection]* My understanding, about three years ago that was put together, and so there is a transparent process and certain standards that are set out. As well, though, where charges may be laid against a Justice Department prosecutor, for example, there would be an outside prosecution.

In other words, the prosecution would not be conducted by a colleague or another employee of the provincial Justice Department. There would be either an individual from federal Justice, from another province or from the private bar who would be called in to conduct that prosecution to ensure that there is no perception of bias in the handling of that prosecution.

Mrs. Smith: As you know, being in opposition, you often get different letters and different alleged comments against all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, and being the Attorney General, I am sure often you would get that kind of thing as well.

My question to the Attorney General is in the event something comes forward, such as in the case of Mr. Deveryn Ross, if allegations are made against departmental Justice staff or the Attorney General or whatever, what is the policy, what is the procedure that the Attorney General goes through, or what procedure would the Attorney General like for myself or anybody else to know about in this regard, to go through to sort things out?

I guess what I am trying to find out is what is the clear policy in the present Attorney General's department when someone has expressed concerns in this area.

Mr. Mackintosh: In terms of a general policy or practice, what I think has been the approach to these issues over the years is a referral of a complainant to the appropriate bodies if that person is not aware already. But, certainly, if there is an allegation that a departmental person acted criminally, I think it would be known to that person to go to the police. I would suspect that that would be general knowledge, that that is where one goes with that kind of concern.

If it is a matter, of course, of a wrongful conviction, that person has a process, and I am sure the federal government has guidelines and support materials available for anyone who wants to make a section 690 application, of which I understand it is not entirely uncommon for those applications to be made in this country. There would have to be, of course, expectations that there is new evidence coming forward or information that seriously puts in question the decision of a judge.

So I think those are two obvious areas of how there could be a response to someone making allegations against departmental staff. Whether this individual has gone to the Ombudsman or the police or the Law Society, I do not have knowledge of that.

Once I have that report, perhaps we can discuss it further to see if there are other options available. Certainly, criminal wrongdoing is a sole area for police to investigate, because it is only the police that have those particular skills of knowing the standards and what the threshold is for having a matter referred for prosecution and indeed, at first instance, the laying of charges.

Mrs. Smith: Just to clarify the question, I am not asking the Attorney General about criminal wrongdoing. I am asking about policy within the Justice Department. What is the policy, what are the steps that automatically happen if, let us say, a departmental staff or someone or a lawyer, everything is under the Justice Department, but it could be a lawyer outside under the minister's jurisdiction because the minister, obviously the Crowns of Prosecutions, everyone, is under the Government's jurisdiction. I am wondering what the procedure is.

* (15:30)

You know, just to reiterate, often both of us get letters—[interjection] If the Attorney General could just allow me some questions and then we could cut some time off and be not misunderstood, if that is all right. Not necessarily criminal kinds of things, but policies within the Justice Department when you have people from outside the Justice Department that are making allegations about conduct either by lawyers within the province or by departmental Justice staff or whatever. There has to be a procedure in place in the Justice Department to deal with those issues I would assume. Even as Justice critic, I feel some days I should have a procedure in place for that kind of thing, because we get many kinds of letters.

I am sure when the Attorney General himself was in opposition he had the same challenges. I know when the former Attorney General was in place, there were certain ways of dealing with things, and I am just asking when something like this comes up, is there a set procedure? Is there a set policy, or is each case just looked at individually and funnelled off according to the individual case?

Mr. Mackintosh: You know, it has been a long-standing practice that the administration of the department is under the jurisdiction, of course, of the deputy as the head of the department.

The chief administrator, the usual course would be that matters coming to the attention of a minister would usually be referred, but depending on the circumstances, to the deputy, and then the deputy would do a triaging, if you will, to determine where that should be sent. It may be though that if complaints come in, they go directly to people in the department. Obviously, that practice would not be available.

If, for example, allegations or complaints come in directly to the assistant deputy minister of Prosecutions or the head of Prosecutions or to a prosecutor, there would be a different flow of how that complaint would be dealt with, but I can tell the member that where complaints come to my attention, the usual is to send them to the deputy as my immediate contact.

The deputy would make a decision as to whether that was a matter to be referred to the police or to the law society or to the department itself or to the federal government, section 690. But again, I guess we are operating on a theoretical basis, because I do not know this individual's entry into the department or to my office.

I might add though that, if there is a matter that is referred to the police, it is also our practice now to address any question from the police for advice, that that not be provided by a Crown attorney in the department if it was a Crown attorney being complained of. In other words, our independent prosecutor policy not only requires a sending out of the prosecution but also the sending out of advice which may lead to a prosecution in order to guard against a perception of bias, but that is in general what the practice is. That is how the departments, I think, right across government have worked on a long-standing basis.

That though again may vary depending on the nature of communication and the background of issues. But I think that it is a rule of thumb perhaps is the best way to describe it, recognizing exceptions are always having to be acknowledged.

Mrs. Smith: On another matter, I had asked the Attorney General for a breakdown of his immediate staff, and I had forwarded that request in writing. I was wondering when I could get a copy of that.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have two memos from the executive director of Administration and Finance answering that question—Mr. Sinnott is here—dated June 5, which I will provide to the member. But just for the record, there was clearly an effort made to respect the provisions of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So I understand that it is actually salary ranges only that can be given in terms of salaries. We cannot give individual salaries. So that is interesting.

The member had asked about staff that had been added to the office of the Minister of Justice since October 1 of 1999. I believe we came into office on the 5th of October, the 3rd or something in that range. These are new

incumbents hired into existing FTEs, new to staff turnover. No new FTEs have been added to the office since October 1, 1999.

First, Janis Bermel, who is a special assistant to the minister, began October 6, 1999, and the salary range is set out in the documentation. Number two, Pauline Riley is executive assistant to the minister and began work on November 8, 1999. Rene Cooney is an administrative secretary hired on March 25, 2000; that is an AY3. Most recently, Kim Wysocki, administrative secretary and hired January 7, 2002, and that position is an AY3.

Staff added to the office of the deputy minister since October 1, 1999, again, there is a new incumbent hired into an existing FTE due to staff turnover. There have been no new FTEs added. Louise Wilkinson is an administrative secretary and began the position on January 2, 2002.

I might note, and this is very important, that the only political staff hired to assist myself since October '99 are Janis Bermel and Pauline Riley, I mentioned earlier. They each fill, of course, a traditional, long-established ministerial support role. As members opposite know, the special assistant deals with public policy and departmental liaison, by and large, and the executive assistant assists the minister with constituency matters, given the pressures of time on ministers, to help to balance the needs to service a constituency, whether one is a minister or not.

* (15:40)

Those are the only two persons directly responsible to the minister, except for, of course, the deputy minister, who also, though, I think has, I understand, an account of reporting to the clerk of Executive Council.

So that leaves Rene Cooney, Kim Wysocki and Louise Wilkinson clearly as staff that cannot be classified as political. That went through a competition or the usual kinds of processes in terms of hiring. They are not individuals who, before their hiring, were known to me, certainly.

In addition, a number of assistant deputy ministers and some other senior managers report

directly to the deputy's office. That is set out in the organizational chart in the Estimates supplement.

The new incumbents appointed to direct reporting positions since October 1, 1999, are the following. Each of them, again, are due to staff turnover, and none represent an expansion of the senior management ranks. In fact, as a result of efforts across government, a former ADM position, the ADM of Civil Justice has been eliminated. Deborah Carlson is the acting director of Constitutional Law, started in that position October 2, 1999, which I believe actually would be before I was appointed, and she began work with the government in June 1986. Irene Hamilton, who is known to many members, of course, having been the Public Trustee, is the ADM of Courts, and started in the position January 2, 2000. She started with government in April of 1991. Anne Bolton is the Public Trustee of Manitoba, known to members on all sides of the House, of course, particularly for her work, not only as a master, but work with Legislative Counsel, assisting members draft legislation and so on. She started in that position April 17, 2000, and originally started with government in August of 1980. Val Perry, again, well known to all members, was appointed ADM Legislative Counsel on January 15, 2001. She began with the Province in February of 1986. Of course, that appointment was as a result of consultations with the Opposition so that we could have a direct appointment of Ms. Perry. Greg Graceffo is the ADM of Criminal Justice and started in that position on April 30, 2001, and began with government in November of 1990. Jim Wolfe, ADM Corrections, started October 6, 2001, and began with government in December 1987.

In addition to the information in that memo, although technically not an individual who reports to the Minister of Justice, I think it is important or is appropriate to include Mr. Rory Henry, who provides support in my separate capacity as the Government House Leader.

The practice that has developed I think many years ago and certainly the practice followed under the previous administration sees that this assistant to the House Leader has a salary paid out of the House Leader's home

department. So currently the Department of Justice is providing funding for this individual's position on an interim basis. So Rory Henry began in the current position on November 15, 1999, which is the date he started with government, although it should be noted that he was an intern who was assigned to the NDP caucus a few years ago.

So I will table that information for the committee.

Mr. Cummings: I would like to pursue some discussion with the minister about auto theft and policing in rural Manitoba and issues related therein. In reviewing the minister's opening statement, he was very emphatic about impaired driving, and that then led into a discussion of auto theft. There is no doubt that these are issues that have to be dealt with and sometimes with varying degrees of success.

I have a couple of general questions. One is what has been the trend in auto theft, and I recognize that as the minister responsible for MPI, he probably has access to information there, but it seems to me that certainly in parts of the province, that trend has been up, not down. I would invite him to provide some numbers in that respect, and then I would be interested to know if he has had any response on initiatives regarding anti-theft devices.

Mr. Mackintosh: The challenge of auto theft really began for Manitoba in 1993 when between 1992 and 1993 there was a horrid and significant increase in the rate of auto theft in the province of Manitoba. Over the next several years, there developed a continuing epidemic of this threat.

Now, we have to recognize that auto theft is not merely a property crime. I have said this many times, that it can be a prerequisite for other crimes. We think of tragedies involving RCMP officers in this province alone involving robberies. It is also, though, I think a crime against persons because so many have been directly killed, permanently disabled or otherwise injured as a result of auto theft.

Manitoba, I think in 1993, gained the unfortunate distinction as having the highest rate of auto theft in Canada. *[interjection]* The

member says he is aware of what happened in the nineties, and he wants to know what is happening in 2000. I do not think you can separate the two because what has become, unfortunately, somewhat entrenched as a continuing epidemic has been shown to be a serious challenge to deal with, and it requires a multi-faceted response involving different approaches that are both on the side of suppression and on the side of prevention.

For the first time, then, since 1993, in the year 2002, there appears to be some pattern of reduction in the rate of auto theft. I want to get into some of the details of that. We are only cautiously optimistic with the early indications of this pattern and are certainly hopeful though that there may be developing a reduction in the theft of autos in Manitoba.

To the end of May of 2002, MPI has reported publicly that there is a 10.8% decrease in auto thefts, representing 350 fewer vehicles stolen for those first months of this year. MPI reports, though, that there continue to be hot spots from time to time in the province. Since 1993 Winnipeg has disproportionately been the hot spot and I believe still continues to be the place where I think as many as 80 percent of the auto thefts or more occur.

* (15:50)

We had over the years breakouts of auto theft in different towns and villages and other cities in Manitoba. That can sometimes arise because even one or two individuals may be responsible for the theft of as many as several cars in one day. That has always posed a challenge to local law enforcement officials, to nip that problem in the bud. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the police to find that there is a small ring or even a small number, one or two individuals even, who may be responsible for a significant percentage rise in local auto thefts, but, in actual fact, of course, the numbers are, you know, there may be an increase, for example, from 10 to 20 in a year, which would certainly show a big percentage, but it is all very important to local communities, though, when there is that kind of an increase in auto theft locally.

We have had in the last year, for example, in the town of Winkler a 52% reduction in auto theft; in Swan River, 45% reduction; in Steinbach, 43 percent. It may not be a big change in numbers. At the same time, we have had in some other communities, last year, for example, in Selkirk there was a fairly significant percentage increase in vehicle thefts. It is down this year. Portage la Prairie late last year and early this year was showing signs of increased auto theft. In fact, from the department and from the member from Portage la Prairie, I received a number of clippings about auto thefts not only in Portage la Prairie but in some of the communities around Portage la Prairie. That may be one of the experiences in the community represented by the honourable member.

The city of Winnipeg has seen a 14.5% decrease in auto thefts to the end of May 2002. Rural Manitoba has seen a 9.8% increase. So while there are 398 fewer vehicles stolen in Winnipeg, there has been 48 more stolen outside of Winnipeg. So one can see the numbers there. In any event, any time there is a pattern like that, the police have taken the matter very seriously.

I am advised that in response to increased auto thefts in the Portage area, the RCMP formed a special task force that was co-ordinated out of the Blue Hills major crimes unit and consisted of staff from Portage, Westlake, Blue Hills and Spruce Plains detachments, all four detachments, as well as assistance from the Winnipeg Police Service forensic unit and assistance from MPI. Ten arrests were made, including some persons I understand from out of province, from Alberta specifically. At this point the RCMP feels that that particular problem, that particular hot spot has hopefully been dealt with. As well, MPI has looked to see how they can form partnerships to assist in any way. We look forward to a continuing and an enhanced role for MPI working with law enforcement.

The issue of Prosecutions resources, I think is important when it comes to auto theft. There has been a recent decision made to have new Prosecutions resources specifically dedicated to prosecuting auto theft. Right now, there is an auto theft Prosecutions team of two supervisors who are to oversee prosecution of these auto theft cases, but we are moving to the next step

now in putting in place dedicated prosecutors who will know thoroughly the ins and outs and all the best case law, the best arguments and the trends in terms of auto theft. Any hot spots in Manitoba that can be serviced by one of these prosecutors will be part of the duties of that individual, including at Portage la Prairie.

In terms of the strategy overall, having dealt with the statistics and dealt with some of the local issues that arise from time to time, Manitoba of course has now a five-year driver licence suspension for convictions. It is a lifetime suspension on a third conviction that is building on the former administration's design of a law for a one-year suspension and we upped that to five years for the first conviction. So that means that offenders who are age 16 and do not have a licence yet will have to wait till age 21 in order to get a licence when there is such a conviction.

The member may be aware of the efforts underway to encourage manufacturers to have immobilizers installed in vehicles. If vehicles could be immobilized from auto theft, clearly there would not be an auto theft problem, barring, of course, the tow truck. But these immobilizers are proven to prevent auto theft. It is a small little box with a lot of wires coming out of it. Not as many wires, though, as I saw in the steering column of my government-issued vehicle when it was stolen a few weeks after being appointed to office. I do not know how someone can figure out the wiring in that steering column, but I also discovered, as a result of that experience, that just because one has an immobilizer does not mean it can be effective in preventing theft because the immobilizer in that government-issued vehicle, which was a solution to the former Attorney General, was not the immobilizer that was approved. It was not one of the four that has been approved by the Vehicle Information Centre of Canada or VIC and capable of immobilizing the several aspects of the vehicle.

It is also important that we take steps to encourage Manitobans to put immobilizers in the vehicles that are in the driveways now. MPI has been rethinking its policy on its incentive, and I think it was looking at a different approach there. But I think it is important that there be a

great discount for installing anti-theft immobilizers to deal with the after-market vehicles.

The member opposite is aware of the auto theft of big vehicles equipped with GPS tracking that the Winnipeg Police has been trying as a pilot. It actually has a videotaping of individuals in the vehicle, in other words, people that get in the vehicle and take off with it. They also can track the location of the vehicle then to the surprise of the thieves.

The You Lose campaign was an important contribution to campaign against auto theft because it was important that Manitobans know that there is a new law that was brought in. I think having laws is just fine, but if people do not know about it, it cannot serve as an effective deterrent.

MPI has also had a direct mail campaign to vehicle owners. In fact, two of them most recently was a direct mail campaign to owners of high-risk vehicles. The MPI is considering the parking lot campaign as well as enhanced driver education on auto theft prevention. MPI provides half a million dollars to the Winnipeg Police Service auto theft unit and as well of course to MPI's own special investigation unit.

Most recently, we developed a community notification of auto theft pilot with Winnipeg Police Service so that those who are block captains in Winnipeg are getting the computerized notices now of outbreaks of auto theft, in addition to break and enters. As well, we are extending that service to representatives of the citizen patrols. It is very important they know of crime trends in the neighbourhoods they are patrolling.

Speaking of citizen patrols, in December MPI, the police, Manitoba Justice and the private sector, but most importantly the citizen patrols, announced a new partnership, so there is now full-time help for citizen patrols; there is an advisory council, a Web site; there are training initiatives that are unfolding as we speak, help with how to patrol, how to report, how to detect, how to recruit. As well there is new support for the equipment for citizen patrols.

* (16:00)

I might add, too, and there has not been much discussion of this, but there is an auto theft task force headed by criminologist Rick Linden looking for further auto theft reduction options. So we look forward to hearing further initiatives from them.

In terms of the general question, we dealt with statistics; we dealt with how that can vary across the province; we dealt with the Portage area in particular; and we dealt as well with the Government's initiative and MPI's partnership.

Mr. Cummings: I thank the minister for that complete, fulsome and filibustering answer he provided. I notice he was talking very quickly about the most recent statistics. It is easy to be down 10 percent if you have been up 20. That was really what I wanted to know. There seemed to be a piece in there the minister missed in 2000. I am not trying to hang him with the numbers. I want to get a picture of what the Government is doing in terms of attacking this problem, No. 1, and it is tied to the issues.

The minister refers to Portage la Prairie. It depends on how big an area he is referring to when he talks about Portage la Prairie, because as he goes north he gets into Gladstone, Amaranth, Plumas areas, Westbourne, which have seen a lot of activity recently. I am interested in his comments that there has been some action taken to put together a task force.

Certainly, I am not asking him to reveal any strategies, but the concern I have, and it seems to be related to a bigger picture of potential and real crime activity that is occurring in the area, is if we have had an out migration of people who might be interested in participating in this kind of crime into rural Manitoba, and if that is precipitated by better enforcement—that is the wrong term because it sounds critical of the local forces, and I do not mean to be that way, but if we have squeezed some of the activity out of the city into the rural areas.

I have two questions: (1) If the minister could address the question around what the numbers over the last couple of years have done in terms of car theft; and (2), as minister responsible both for this department and for MPI, he is in a very persuasive position.

VIC is an accepted way of applying insurance related to risk, but it is also not new that North America is about a decade behind in anti-theft devices. The ability to lock out or freeze the ignition system in Great Britain is an example, Mr. Chair. It seems to me about 10 years ago they had a very active campaign.

The second question is then: Is he considering discounts related to anti-theft devices? Mr. Chairperson, I would prefer that he answer the question about numbers of thefts first.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, what I do have is a detailed breakdown of 2002 over 2001, in terms of the month-by-month statistics which, as I say, in each month of 2002, there is a decrease over that month of 2001 so that we are down 10.8 percent now to the end of May.

Yes, there are 350 fewer vehicles stolen overall, but I still think that there is no time for complacency. There is a lot of work to do.

There has been some rise and falls over the year since 1993 in terms of auto theft. Nonetheless, we have this continuing epidemic.

By the way, until 1992, it looked like there were in the range of 3000 or 4000 vehicles a year being stolen, and then, by 1993, it was up to about 8000. Then we got as high as over 11 000 in both, it looked like, in '97 and 2000, so relatively minor fluctuations along there. So, hopefully, this year we will see a more significant decline, but I think that depends, too, in terms of what further initiatives can be brought to bear over the rest of the year and how effective our prosecutions are. But I think, as well, there is so much in force. There is always, and the area of crime depends on our law enforcement agencies, which really has been doing an exceptional job.

I think, too, the accountability, the responsiveness of the RCMP to increased auto thefts in the Portage area attest to the willingness of the RCMP to work with WPS and MPI and to look at different ways that they can organize themselves to deal with hot spots.

I will answer the question, and we can deal with immobilizers or anti-theft devices.

I am glad to hear from the member some interest and knowledge about immobilizers because I have been very interested in this area. I, too, like the member, think that Canada has been following behind other western countries in the use of its technology.

You know what, that reminds me, too, of so many other areas of technological advancement. You know, I think of the Internet crimes and how we are tooling for that, really behind the U.K. and the U.S.A.

When it comes to immobilizers, though, we have seen the experience in the United Kingdom and Australia, in particular, and the European Union, where they are very aggressive. In fact, in some places, there are laws that even require people to have immobilizers installed when they pass on their vehicles.

I am very concerned about that kind of—there may be some debate on that one, but I think what is important is that there be incentives or discounts that are effective and, if they are not effective, that we rethink them. We encourage people to move in this direction. I think we can do that through public education and through the use of the public insurer that we have in Manitoba.

I think, in the state of Illinois that I visited and did some research on their auto-theft reduction strategy, they have roughly 350 auto insurers in that state. You can see the challenge that they had to face in trying to get them to work together and pool their resources to fund an auto-theft task force. In Manitoba, we do not have to deal with that hurdle, because we have the public insurer, but it is nonetheless a real challenge to work with Transport Canada and the automakers to move on the installation of immobilizers at factory.

I was pleased to be able to make the pitch to the automakers of Canada and to the auto insurers of Canada in the last several weeks, a pitch for immobilizers. I think we are up between 50 and 60 percent now of the vehicles sold in Canada are equipped with factory-installed immobilizers that meet the specifications of VICC. But 40 percent remains, and that is a serious challenge.

* (16:10)

I am having ongoing discussions with the national auto theft reduction strategy, in terms of where Transport Canada is at. We have raised this, of course, with the federal government. Manitoba raised this issue, and got unanimous support from the Justice ministers in Canada to put pressure on Transport Canada and the auto industry. I think, though, we have to make different efforts to bring the word immobilizer into the vocabulary of Canadians.

Canadians know what The Club is. A lot of Canadians do not know what the immobilizer is. I think that is important because it is not only empowering people with a crime-prevention tool, but I think it will make an immobilizer a selling feature in new vehicles, and will be a plus for auto makers to have that installed as basic equipment.

Mr. Cummings: Well, thank you. That opens up a couple of different questions, one of which I do not expect an answer today, but I would like the minister to provide an answer when he is able, and that is: How much money is the Government now asking MPIC to put into crime-fighting areas?

I ask this not because I think the numbers are huge, but maybe they are larger than I know about. Certainly, there is an unclear area about how much Crown should be expected to participate in responsibilities that would normally fall within the purview of government. I would like that to cover the spectrum of direct granting, and the community patrol programs, and the direct funding of support to police services, and, hopefully, the department and MPI. If the answer is unable to be provided here, I will ask the question again at the annual report of MPI, because I think it is a number that would be important. Frankly, it is not without some grounds to ask.

Québec has a Crown corporation that has a different form of auto insurance, but they have had huge amounts of money that they have had directed into traffic safety. I think it is only reasonable that the public understands where the funds are coming from, and where they might be paying for them, whether they are in their

Autopac insurance, or whether they are through their day-to-day taxes.

Having said that, I want to go back. I think that the minister still has not answered my question about the near-term numbers, but he has given me a good enough picture of it. I do not need to waste a lot of Estimates time on it. What I am more concerned about is that if we have what appears to be a local outbreak in the Portage area and north, of vandalism and car theft, it may not just be car theft, although that seems to be the basis for an awful lot of the activity.

Certainly, we know that the RCMP detachments in the area have been very frustrated and realize, and I realize, that it is very difficult area for them to police, given the distance, given that three different boundaries prevail, plus the DOTCs at Sandy Bay. It does create a situation that has caused quite an upheaval in the local population, and, without compromising anybody's position, it seems to me that—and I am not asking the minister to compromise anything.

If he wants to give me the answer off the record, I will accept that. But it seems to me that while he can look at his reporting format and see that some of these detachments are fully staffed or almost fully staffed, to use the vernacular, there may be quite a few ghost cops out there, that the position is listed as full but in fact there is no active person in that position. It has maybe got to the point where there are some of those detachments that are, one in particular is handicapped. I would invite the minister not to answer the question but perhaps give me the answer off the record, because I think it would be poor public policy for us to be talking about it if indeed there is a shortage.

So I will leave it there and ask the minister if he would consider doing that, because this is not being asked on behalf of officers. It is asked on behalf of constituents who feel that they support their police and they are very thankful for the support that they are getting, but they are asking seriously about whether or not there are as many active bodies in place as they think there is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I would be glad to have a conversation with the member on any particular

detachment. I do not know if he was talking about Portage or not, but I know, for example, that our information dated 02/05/17 on the Portage provincial policing services agreement indicates that there is an established complement of 11 and there are 11 bodies. Then for the Portage traffic services there is an established complement of 8 and there are 7 bodies. The Portage municipal detachment has 23 as the complement as agreed to between the city and the RCMP, and there are currently 22. The Portage municipal GIS has a complement of two and currently is at a level of two.

So there is only a difference of two right now and out of a total of some 30, 40-some individuals, that may be due to some transfers or pregnancies, maternity leave, retirement, whatever. So I do know that there can be some vacancies arising from time to time, which of course is in the sole purview of the RCMP to manage. What we have done is provided the RCMP, we believe, with the funding to enable them to staff to the full complement that is authorized. In fact, the count complement has been increased in recent years. If a detachment is down a bit and if that causes a concern, I would certainly pass that information on to the head of the RCMP or any other. I would do anything I could to seek attention to that by the RCMP.

I think right now we are hearing from the RCMP, and I hear it often out and around, that they are very pleased with the progress in the last couple of years. This is an issue that has been worked on by the department and my office, of course, and most notably by the RCMP and by the senior officers with the RCMP locally to ensure that we were getting recruits to Manitoba and we were keeping them and that we were working together as a police force and a province to make sure that the bodies were in place and that the complement was being strengthened.

Mr. Cummings: Well, the numbers that the minister is quoting do not jive with the understanding that I have been given. I think it may be very much like any other staffing situation. I am putting him on notice that I would like to have a private conversation with him about some of these positions, because, as I said, I do not want to compromise anybody. But it seems to me that

there are pregnancies and stress leave and then there may be some off to Kananaskis, I suppose, right now, and I acknowledge that, but it is a long-term issue and that leads to my other question, I am certainly not alleging that there is any lack of co-operation, but in the policing between the RCMP and DOTC, and I guess perhaps I am using the wrong acronym now that they are reorganizing.

* (16:20)

But I would ask, and this is more of a statement than it is a question, that everything be done to assure that there is co-operation between regions and between those detachments, because it seems to me that the sharp rise that we have had in the area with some co-ordination may see some offsetting results, promising results which I believe may be evident.

But further to that, with the three areas converging in that area and four different detachments being responsible, that is Portage, Spruce Plains, Amaranth and DOTC, it certainly behooves everyone to encourage as much co-operation and overlap as can occur in that area when all of those boundaries converge, because of the possibility of things falling between the cracks or more perhaps because some of the constituents are not even sure which detachment might respond, to be quite honest. That is not necessarily the fault of the police. It is a communication issue, however, that we have to deal with locally.

That leads to the question about can the minister put on the record what support he has for local patrols or Citizens on Patrol or any of those types of programs? Would he care to put on the record what is available and what he would recommend to be the appropriate approach for some of these communities?

Mr. Mackintosh: I think the experience in the Portage and Westlake-Blue Hills area does attest to the eagerness of the RCMP to co-operate across detachments. It is my understanding that the RCMP have been very responsive to concerns in the member's constituency that have been raised by his constituents and are looking

to find solutions which, of course, would include the RCMP's co-operation.

I understand that there may be some interest in citizen patrols. This is an area where I have had the fortune to have some experience locally. Our neighbourhood, my constituency has been dealing with some disproportionate challenges in terms of public safety as well as other areas, whether it is in the St. Johns or Luxton neighbourhoods or Seven Oaks or West Kildonan. So I was able to learn first-hand how the citizen patrol can be organized and how important it was to have the support of the local police, as Winnipeg Police was so supportive.

But I also recognize that these citizens and this grassroots movement needed a little help, and while there has been sporadic assistance in the past, it has not been really co-ordinated, and I do not think there has been a linking between the different citizen patrol groups in terms of how they can best do the job. We have around Manitoba perhaps as many as a hundred citizen patrol groups, so there is a lot to learn from out there.

We also have, I think, a new initiative that can make a real difference to help local citizens organize citizen patrols. It was very difficult, first of all, to know how to organize in terms of whether there should be a constitution, whether you should have an executive, whether you have regular meetings, what are the regulations or the guidelines in terms of patrolling, how do you get the equipment, how do you get jackets, and that can take a lot of time and effort from people who simply want to get out there and patrol and just protect public safety.

So now, with the new initiative, there is assistance available. There are jackets available with the recognized logo, which, by the way, is not just about having a provincial identity now for citizen patrols in a sense that their local patrols are part of something bigger, but also it is great for police to know what the citizen patrols look like in terms of their colours, and they are easy to identify. But whether it is a patrolling by way of vehicle or by walking, I can put the member in touch with the representative who is housed in MPI, that can give some how-to

information for his local communities to organize citizen patrols.

I think some of the most vigorous and long-lasting patrols are in the rural communities of Manitoba. Some have been around for over 10 years. Of course, the patrols that walk, there is a lot of satisfaction from that, including the exercise. Sometimes in rural communities, that is just not practical. The towns are too small or 60 miles is a little too much. It is still good exercise but maybe too good.

Many of the rural patrols, of course, are in vehicles. So, as a result of this initiative, their training materials have been put together, and there are training sessions, I understand, that are unfolding, but I think it is really timely right now for the minister's constituency to be able to take advantage of that as one way to better protect local safety. Quite frankly, I think, too, that the citizens that get involved in this, they come to love this kind of commitment. Whether it is every couple of weeks they go out for a couple of hours or whatever scheduling is convenient to them, they find that it is a way of taking back their community, if you will, for lack of a better expression.

It is a way to do their part and connect with the police. They are eyes and ears for police. They are not the apprehenders, but I think, more than anything, citizen patrols provide a real preventative function that would-be thieves or break-and-enter thieves would think twice when they know that their local citizens are connected, and they are out there on patrol at different hours.

The experience in places, I think, for example, of Selkirk, which has a wonderful stable, strong citizen patrol, and they have been keeping statistics, it is tremendous what difference they can make, in terms of impaired driving too, in terms of speed-watch programs, in terms of identifying stolen autos.

In our community, we have the success stories of catching people doing graffiti, preventing people from doing graffiti, helping children who are lost. I think it is a wonderful grassroots movement that just needed that extra little

oomph and support, and they had to know that someone is there to help them.

So what I will do is I will just make a note. I can pass on to the member the contact person and the phone number, because that is the best way, is to make that connection early on, and then, of course, it is up to the local citizens to organize a little patrol and start their scheduling.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I accept that, but I have two observations. One is that I can assume that support for these types of programs is coming out of MPI now as opposed to being led by his department, and that is okay. I just want to know if that is a correct statement. I also want it clearly on the record that this area, in my opinion, has the potential to become a powder keg, that there are people who are close to taking the law in their own hands. It has become serious enough that I am concerned that some of the local citizens—it is not just the little walk around the block, or it is not just a pleasant drive in the country in the evening—are going to get if they become involved in this. I am sure they know the limitations of what they can do, and they know that this may be all they can do.

* (16:30)

I think it would only take five minutes of anyone's time to review what some of the communities—the seriousness with which they view this current outbreak of crime. It is not new. It has been on and off for a number of years, but the frustration level of the local citizenry is very high and very explosive. I certainly will make sure that they have available information for setting up any kind of assistance that they can provide to be the additional eyes in the community. I would advise the minister: these communities are not comfortable with what, in their eyes, is, frankly, being invaded. Of course, their first reaction is to look towards the available police and they have all been very clear to say that they believe the police are doing their very best. That needs to be clearly on the record.

But I also say for the minister and anyone in his department who has nothing better to do than read Estimates, who might want to take an interest in this because it is a serious situation and I do not want to see anything more harmful

come out of this than is already occurring. This is not accidental. There is some organization behind the type of vandalism and personal property damages that are going on out there. Sooner or later the police services will be able to bring that to closure but I wanted to make sure that the minister was aware that it is more than, at least in our experience, it is more than a normal or coincidental situation and it may well be that some of the perpetrators in other parts of the province are assisting. I think you can read between the lines in what I mean by that.

Which leads me to one other question on rural policing, and that is: It is my understanding that we are at or near full complement according to the paperwork that the Province has. Can the minister confirm what the staffing complement is in RCMP services in the province right now?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just a couple of comments on some of the information put forward by the member. The MPI has actually had an ongoing role with citizen patrols, and working with them; for example, using the speed watch program, those signs that tell people how fast they are going as well as doing parking lot audits with them. So it is a natural partnership. Justice continues to be an important partner in this on the auto theft task force with regard to the training program.

The member is right in that the role of the police is the most critical, and I would trust the member, of course, if he had any information about incidents, that those have already been passed on, and would be followed up on by the police.

In terms of the concern about vigilantism or concerns about citizen patrols, it was identified that one of the important improvements to the citizen patrol program in Manitoba had to be enhanced training, in terms of how to respond to incidents; how to deal with the issues at hand, recognizing that a close relationship between the citizen patrol and the local detachment is the best way to proceed. That is where the citizen patrols have been strongest. Where the detachment can call a citizen patrol in the event of an outbreak of problems, for example, or even where there is maybe a big community dance or something, that is where we have seen some of

the greatest successes. This is a partnership. There have to be those tools available for the citizen patrols so that they know how to deal with matters without causing harm to themselves or causing any difficulties with regard to evidence.

In terms of the RCMP complement, the regular and civilian members, the authorized establishment is 622. That, of course, in terms of the numbers of bodies will have a fluctuation as the member alluded to earlier in terms of retirements or resignations or mat leaves, and so on. The availability of recruits, of course, can vary throughout the year. So I think that it is probably a daily analysis in terms of what the staffing levels may be. Now, I know there has been an increase over the last couple of years. I can advise the member as well that there has been some significant increase to the provincial funding level of the RCMP.

Since 2000 we have made some good progress in improving funding to our provincial police force. In '99-2000, for example, the budget was roughly \$53 million. In our first year we increased that by 6.3 percent to \$56.3 million, almost \$56.4 million. Mr. Chair, in 2001-2002, we increased again by 5.15 percent to \$59.3 million. This year the budget was increased further. I understand that it could be up to \$61.5 million, but as well I understand that there are other amounts in respect of, for example, the DNA work. Overall the provincial contribution to provincial policing, that is, under Provincial Policing in the Estimates book, it is page 118, it went from \$63.6 million to \$66.4 million this year, which is an increase of 4.5 percent.

The objective here is to do everything we can financially to ensure that the RCMP can enjoy servicing Manitoba at the complement level.

* (16:40)

I understand that the average utilization may be as high as 618 this year, recognizing, as the member said, the little fluctuations that happen given changes in personnel, which is historic. This is an expensive operation, we are discovering. You can see the increases to this line are certainly in excess of the increase to the cost

of living, and certainly over and above, significantly, the general rate of public expenditure increase in Manitoba.

We wanted to make a commitment to RCMP in this province. We also just want to put on the record the information that where there is a move to Aboriginal policing that may not be RCMP

For example, if there are increases in the Dakota Ojibway Police Service in an area that was formerly policed by the RCMP, there could be a decrease in the complement while not, of course, representing any decreased commitment to the RCMP policing. Much of the move to Aboriginal policing in Manitoba appears to be in the area of the RCMP First Nations policing as we have, for example, in Waywayseecappo. There are plans in the works to have Aboriginal policing through the RCMP-First Nations policing service at OCN over the next year or two. There has been some allocation in the budget for that kind of change.

Mr. Cummings: Is the department involved in any negotiations nationally in terms of lab services that would be available to the RCMP, or any police services in the province?

Mr. Mackintosh: The answer is, yes, absolutely. In fact, we have taken a very vigorous position, and we are very concerned about some of the changes that the federal government has contemplated for RCMP lab services which are used by law enforcement agencies in this province. We are right now waiting for a response from the Solicitor General to my last correspondence of several weeks ago that responded to the federal government's latest idea about what should happen out of Winnipeg, which, I do not think, was good enough for Manitoba law enforcement. There was a concern at one time, and I think this has been a concern over several years, that as a result of some analysis at the federal level there would be an amalgamation of lab services, and perhaps Manitoba would lose a lab entirely. We did not take very kindly to that one and began some lobbying with the Solicitor General involving the police forces in Brandon, Winnipeg, the RCMP and, as well, pressure at the staff levels.

Around Christmas we were then advised that the RCMP was looking at maintaining a lab in Winnipeg, but it would not be doing the full service that is available right now and would be doing biology work in Winnipeg and firearms. So we have been making our voices known and doing what we can right now. I just recently saw correspondence from Winnipeg Police Service as well expressing serious concern about the proposed shift, and now we are awaiting a response from the Solicitor General.

I might say that we were momentarily pleased when we were advised that the federal government was going to be responsive to Manitoba's concerns, but I think it was important for us not to have responded positively at all to the position taken by the federal government in December. But we formed a working group comprised of the Brandon police and the RCMP, the Winnipeg Police Service and the Department of Justice to examine that. As a result of the examination, we certainly are less than pleased and we have made that known to the federal government.

So, when we get this response, we will see what further action we take from here. We have made public statements, and we always consider the role of that. As well, minister-to-minister communications can be of different kinds, and so we will consider other options if we are not satisfied with the response by the federal government.

There may be, as I suspect, concerns from other provinces in the country as well. What they have done is put a proposal together whereby we would have to send out evidence from Manitoba. There is even the issue of where it is sent, whether it is sent to the local lab or would have to be sent directly. That is a concern.

So I thank the member for raising that, and it may be that we will have to have a strong united voice at some point if we are not heard.

Mr. Cummings: Well, certainly from my limited understanding of it, it is an issue that the minister is going to have to bear down on.

As I recall, the negotiations between the Province and the federal government were fairly acrimonious the last time that there was an

agreement struck in terms of cost share. That agreement is obviously still in place, but is there an end date to it, or have there been any changes in that agreement?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to clarify, is the member asking about the provincial policing agreement? *[interjection]* Well, there was a dinner last night, and this conversation arose in terms of the high cost of maintaining complement and the high cost of policing, recognizing that the Province is responsible for 70 percent of that bill. Yet there is a serious question about, well, why the Province does not have a greater role in determining the costs of provincial policing, whether it is salaries or the other employment costs that we are responsible for the majority of.

Now, we do not have any indication that the federal government is going to propose a changing of the ratio of payment. There are always rumours, and from time to time provinces get their backs up, and they start talking and analyzing the value of having a provincial police force that is not RCMP.

I, for one, have the highest of regard for the RCMP in terms of their professionalism. They are just an excellent organization. Whether you want to compare it to any country in the world, I think we should be very proud of the RCMP. They have excellent international connections, and, of course, just the strength of it being a national police force is of value to Manitobans.

But, in the meantime, we certainly are concerned about consultations and our financial responsibility for the RCMP. I might say that we have a very good relationship with the commissioner for the RCMP. We were consulted on the new assistant commissioner from Manitoba, and we commend the commissioner for that kind of consultation. I have ongoing discussions with him about the role that the RCMP, both provincially and federally, can bring to the table to better deal with the challenges of crime in Manitoba.

* (16:50)

But the current agreement with the federal government expires—*[interjection]* It is a 20-year agreement which I think has about another

decade or so left, so it is not any time soon, but I think it is going to be a challenge for attorneys general right across this country. The deputy ministers, when they met just a couple of weeks ago, agreed to establish a working group to review and recommend on the future of policing in Canada, and Manitoba will certainly be active in that.

I think I heard just recently that the Province of Alberta was again looking at this issue of a provincial policing force, but I do not think they were really torquing that up, and I do not know if that got any further. I think, every once in a while, the provinces rattle their sabres and are just concerned about the lack of input into the cost of policing.

Mr. Cummings: Well, if I could read my own notes, I would have asked this question earlier, but I ask your indulgence to go back, in part, related to the somewhat local questions I was asking. It is my understanding that Amaranth court, I cannot say about Portage, that they have a very significant time between when someone might be apprehended and when a court date might be available. It might even be as much as eight months, I have been told. First of all, is that correct? Second, is that appropriate? Thirdly, is there anything the minister can do to assist that?

I have mentioned the high frustration level of some of my constituents. Some of them have recently emigrated from Alberta, where there is a little greener grass down in Manitoba, so when you talk about frustration within the community, that maybe helps explain my concern about how people may not be patient in solving this problem. A waiting date of that long for a court date adds to the frustration, even if it is six months, frankly, even if it is four months. I am asking if the minister has a different view or has some thoughts on that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Portage Corrections, I understand, serves Amaranth, and the time it takes to go to trial in the different circuit areas out of Portage varies. We did add a 0.5 support staff to Portage la Prairie as a result of the Ernst & Young review. That Ernst & Young review has recommended some further Crown support, I think, at 0.5. It was two additional Crowns to be shared among all the regional offices. So that is

part of the phasing in, recognizing Ernst & Young did not recommend a lot of prosecutors. They really focussed on the need for support staff and reorganization.

In the meantime, the Prosecutions Branch has advised Portage, I understand, according to information I have received from that area, that where they need assistance, that will be arranged from Winnipeg or from Brandon. So that is there for the Portage Prosecutions office. I hope that they are able to take advantage of that arrangement. As well, with the auto-theft prosecutor coming on stream, I think there can be an additional assistance for that area in the area of auto thefts.

I do recognize that, from the report from the RCMP in that area, indeed some of the arrests were not only for auto theft, but for break and enter, and the member is certainly accurate.

The question, when it comes to the time it takes to set a matter down for trial, is an issue around the issue of undue delay or what is unreasonable delay. The Supreme Court of Canada has looked at that and has set down certain guidelines. I think they have said that, generally for a matter that does not involve a preliminary inquiry and is the sort of the usual run-of-the-mill matter, I think it is a time frame of roughly nine months or so that that should be pursued.

When there is a preliminary inquiry, that can triple the time it takes to process a case. By the way, it is our view, a strongly held view, that preliminary inquiries should be done away with. It is not necessary anymore. We are involved in national debate on that one, and there are strong views on different sides of it.

But we know there are some circuit areas where we are trying to get some improvement. We recognize that sometimes it is not just a matter of more prosecutors, that it is a matter of how times are co-ordinated and what kinds of supports are put in place and how cases are managed, what information is available and an early date to determine if the matter is proceeding or not, has there been dialogue with the victim at an early date to determine if the matter

is proceeding, do you have the evidence to proceed.

So, in terms of Amaranth itself, my understanding is that there are dates that are available in January. It looks to be one of the more problematic circuit courts that is being served by Portage, if not anywhere. So there has been ongoing discussion, I understand, between Prosecutions in Winnipeg and Portage, recognizing that there should be a use of Prosecutions resources, if that is the reason or if it is just a matter of volume or availability of defence counsel, recognizing that delay may be caused by several factors.

Mr. Cummings: I thank the minister for that answer.

I am not well enough versed or able to indicate if I think there is any blame to appropriate. I am simply pointing out that, for whatever reason it may, I think that this needs to be addressed in terms of length of delay and certainly wanted it on the record that I encourage the minister to look at it and do what would be available. Frankly, I am not sure if it is—I would not even suggest that it was Prosecutions. I am suggesting that the system is gummed up or backed up and that I would encourage the minister to do what he can to provide timely court dates because some of these people are pretty mobile as well. That adds to the workload of the police. If it is obviously a date that some of them do not particularly want to keep, it adds to the workload of the police, who are, I would suggest, stretched pretty thin already.

So I thank the minister for being willing to discuss what is a somewhat local situation. I cannot say whether it is more widely spread in terms of police resources and/or the ability to move people through the court.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

Call in the Speaker. Committee rise.

* (17:00)

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., we will now move on to Private Members' Business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—The Assiniboine Memorial Curling Club Holding Company Ltd. Additional Powers Act

Mr. Speaker: Will we be debating on second reading Private Bill 301, The Assiniboine Memorial Curling Club Holding Company Ltd. Additional Powers Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck)?

Is there agreement for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? Agreed? Agreed.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Will we be debating on second reading Public Bill 200, The Elections Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale)? Stand? Agreement for the bill to remain standing? [*Agreed*]

We will now move to proposed Resolution 20, National Agriculture Summit Needed.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—National Agriculture Summit Needed

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS, in June 2001, federal, provincial and territorial Agriculture ministers met in the Yukon to discuss the state of Canada's agricultural sector; and

WHEREAS they have met at least once since then and are currently meeting in Halifax; and

WHEREAS arising out of this meeting was a national action plan ostensibly aimed at

ensuring that Canada's agriculture and agrifood sector is well prepared for the future; and

WHEREAS the Member for Swan River was a signatory to this action plan, whose strategy for renewal in agriculture includes having farm families pursue options such as enhancing the capacity to earn off-farm income or choosing non-farm income; and

WHEREAS Manitoba farmers were hoping for something more substantive to arise from the Yukon meetings, instead of being offered an action plan whose idea of renewal is to have farmers work off the farm or to get out of the business all together; and

WHEREAS farmers need an immediate cash infusion, not more vague pledges to review safety nets; and

WHEREAS, through the actions of the federal government and the provincial government, a negative message about the viability of the agriculture sector is being sent to existing farmers and those who might be considering getting into agriculture in the future; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive, national agricultural and rural development strategy would provide tremendous benefits, not only to farmers and to rural communities, but also to the overall Canadian economy; and

WHEREAS a national summit is urgently needed to address both the challenges and the opportunities facing Canada's agricultural sector and the rural economy; and

WHEREAS such a summit should include participation by all the stakeholders, including producers, industry, business and community leaders and politicians, in order to examine impediments to growth in the agricultural and rural economy and to find ways to overcome them.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to ask the federal government to consider organizing a national summit to examine ways of developing an approach

aimed at producing and sustaining growth in the agricultural sector and the rural economy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba direct the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Motion presented.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, we have seen, over the last week, a process of events that I think are somewhat unprecedented in this province and maybe even in Canada, but I think it behooves all of us in this Legislature to, not only find ways to address the events of this last week, but indeed propose action and in a somewhat more united manner than what has happened in the last while. The Opposition of this Government has conceded to the request of government on a number of occasions to act in an all-party manner as we did when we went out in search of ideas and thoughts and views from the agricultural community to help align ourselves into a position that would allow for a comprehensive and cohesive approach to, once and for all, solving the dilemma that agriculture finds itself in.

The weather conditions that agriculture has experienced in southern and eastern Manitoba over the last week and a half, I think, is a demonstration of what farmers have to put up regardless of having to face the trade wars that are currently raging in the world between the U.S. and the EEC and other nations and the competition that our farmers as individuals today face in this province from the U.S. Treasury, from the European treasuries, and indeed many other sectors in the world. Our farmers are forced to compete on a one-to-one basis.

It was hoped that the negotiations that our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has been in over the last year and a half, starting in 2001 in the Yukon, that she would have at least been able to impress her federal counterparts and, indeed, her provincial counterparts to take action to resolve this issue once and for all.

Yet what we see here is a demonstration in this House just a few days ago in Question Period, when the question was asked: Are you going to participate as a province in a new national farm bill? Her answer was no. The Premier's (Mr. Doer) answer was: I am appalled that we are breaking ranks. Breaking ranks on what, Mr. Speaker? Breaking ranks to defend our farmers, to support our farmers. Nowhere have we ever seen a greater disparity of ideas and views than I have seen over the last week in this House, demonstrated by my Government.

Let me read the essence of a farm bill that was proposed by the federal minister and the Prime Minister indeed that has supposedly been negotiated by our Minister of Agriculture and agreed to by our Premier. Yet they are saying we will have no part of this. What are they going to participate in if they will not have any part of this? Let me read some of the initiatives announced by the federal government: a \$3.4-billion federal share of the resources over six years to accelerate and implement the agricultural policy framework, which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Agriculture, the Member for Swan River, has negotiated on behalf of her Government and her colleagues. The backbenchers of this Government are not even aware of the wording in this agreement.

The provincial territorial initiative to secure profitability for Canadian agriculture in the 21st century, and this Government says no. The \$1.2 billion, \$600 million over each of the two next years to help farmers make the transition to a new and more effective generation of programs dealing with risks, including drought, provincial cost sharing will be on top of this. The \$1.2 billion is in addition to the existing federal income support.

* (17:10)

This Government says no instead of going back to the feds and saying we also want flooding including in this initiative and we will cost-share, as we have previously cost-shared in this package of programs. It is amazing and astounding. The people of Manitoba, the farmers of Manitoba, and indeed the business community in much of rural Manitoba and in the city are asking us: Where is this Doer government at?

What have they done over the last two years? Are they not even familiar with their own negotiated agreement that the federal government took such pain to announce in the back forty of a farm not too far out of Ottawa?

Well, let me say to you again, Mr. Speaker, the next portion of this program is something that I think we should all pay attention to. That is the federal investment to assist in the transition of the new agricultural policy framework, including \$264.5 million for environmental action, which this minister has spoken so highly of, including improving access to newer and more environmentally friendly pesticides, increasing the number of farms with environmental plans, taking environmentally fragile land out of production, and developing renewable energy resources.

This is what our NDP government is saying no to? One hundred and fifty million to improve global market access for Canadian products. That is what we are saying no to? Eighty million for additional measures to deal with drought, including measures to increase water supplies, provinces to add cost-shared portion. This is what our Government is saying no to? Seventy-five million for the development of rural communities and co-operatives. This is what the NDP government is saying no to? To the development of co-operatives? Twenty million to encourage investment in agricultural innovations. That is what our NDP government is saying no to?

It is astounding and unbelievable, ladies and gentlemen, that this Premier (Mr. Doer) will stand in his place and argue a trade imbalance initiative, a compensation package for trade when the announcement out of Ottawa was something almost contrary to a trade compensation initiative. Do these members of the Legislature in the back benches not understand the difference?

As I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) the other day, did she not understand what she had underwritten in principle to be brought forward by the federal government as a national action plan that would cross all provincial boundaries? Did they not understand it? This is not a trade retaliation bill nor is this a

trade retaliation compensation package. There is no mention of it in this announcement.

As the Prime Minister said clearly, and I quote: This is not a trade retaliation bill. As the Minister of Agriculture federally said, this is not a trade retaliation bill. And yet we have a Minister of Agriculture, who is currently in Halifax, who is going to say to her counterparts, we cannot participate in this bill. We cannot participate because we have not got the money, and she negotiated the bill. How absolutely astoundingly deceptive. A move by our Premier—and we know the backbenchers have no knowledge of this, the Premier (Mr. Doer) would dare stand in this House and say we will not participate in an action in a bill that was negotiated by his minister.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you what I heard the Premier say the other day is a complete denial of his confidence in his minister's ability to represent the farm community at the national level in debates and negotiations. I say to you, honourable members opposite, members of the Government and minister, that you have a real problem on your hands when your Premier has denied that what she negotiated is acceptable to him and his Government. He has no choice but to ask for the resignation of his Minister of Agriculture because this is clearly a vote of non-confidence by the Premier when he says, and indicates clearly, that he has no will nor desire to participate in this kind of negotiated agreement that his minister has set her hand to.

I would suggest to all members of the government side, including the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), that he take a very close look at what the news release from Ottawa was and what it implies. I would suggest that he write a letter, as he does so often, to the newspapers, and explain to the newspapers his Government's position on—

An Honourable Member: I did already. Did you not read it?

Mr. Jack Penner: He says he did already. Did you not read it? Well, I would suggest that he write another one because I believe the next page, the background, says the importance of agriculture and the agrifood sector to the Canadian economy, the Canadian agriculture and

agrifood system accounts for \$100 billion in annual retail and food service sales and 8.3 percent of the total Canadian gross domestic product in the year 2000. In 2000, Canadian agrifood exports accounted for 3.8 percent of the world's agrifood exports, making Canada the world's third largest agrifood exports behind the United States and the European Union.

Food processing is the largest manufacturing sector in the seven provinces. It represents the second largest manufacturing sector in Ontario, and the third largest British Columbia and New Brunswick. It accounts for 10 percent of the total share of manufacturing shipments in Canada. In 2001 the industry contributed \$7.4 billion to the Canadian trade balance. That means we earned \$7.4 billion in U.S. dollars to help offset the interest payments that we would have had to pay on that kind of money in this year. Accounting for 10 percent of the total Canadian trade surplus there has been a steady climb in the value of Canada's agricultural export from \$11 billion a decade ago to a record \$26.5 billion in 2001.

This Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and this Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province have no idea, have no idea what they are saying no to. I would suspect that if they truly had read the agreed-to national strategy that the Government of Canada had announced just a few short days ago they would have taken a different approach and a different view and provided different answers to our questions in this House.

I would dare say that it behooves all of us to take a good, hard look at what \$26.5 billion worth of goods and trade mean to this country and the huge amount of products that we export out of the province of Manitoba and what the total economic effect of that would be if that part of the economy would collapse.

I dare say the investment that this Government is being asked to make this all-party, agreed-to, or, I should say, all-government, all provincial governments and federal government agreement that was announced by the federal government. I would dare say this, that we will stand by this NDP government if they go back to the federal government as an all-party agreement and say now let us deal with the

trade retaliation. Let us announce another program that will deal with the offsets to the trade problems and that this should be, the trade offset should be a national program without the involvement of the provinces. That is where we have constantly been.

That is where we will be. But this is an all-party, all-provincial agreement that must be adhered to. If our minister backs out of this I tell you that the farmers of Manitoba and the businesses of Manitoba will suffer.

* (17:20)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record. I am shocked that the Opposition would throw up the flag and say surrender, we surrender, federal government, we will do whatever you want. We will accept whatever you're offering. We had an agreement that we would stick together on this. The moment you start to see cracks in any kind of partnership, the feds are going to jump all over us and just hand us whatever they want.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, this goes back to the days, I mean, first of all we had the Crow rate around three-quarters of a billion dollars. We have had it. Mulroney started it. He built the guillotine and the Liberals used it and they finally chopped the farmers. I will tell you this goes back to the days where you have this idea somehow that yes, let us push the feds, let us hold their feet to the fire and they throw a few crumbs out for us and then we are supposed to jump at it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity for me to speak. I know that many of the farmers in the southeast in the area that my constituency is are going through some hardship right now. I know the member from Emerson made a couple of comments with regard to this that stated that they are going through a great deal of hardship at this time.

I have to commend the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), who have been out there, who have seen the district and have looked at many of the

communities and lands that have been flooded by this unprecedented flood and have certainly heard from farmers directly and many people who live in those communities with regard to the hardship that they are going through.

I am pleased to see that our Government has come forward, unprecedented in many ways as well, offering the people compensation, we know it is not full compensation, but certainly offering them some money, showing good faith that we are there for them and in an unprecedented amount of time that it took to do that. The Minister of Transportation and Government Services, as well the Minister of Conservation, be commended for this.

I know the member opposite from Emerson raised a number of issues. I am not sure where to start necessarily, but I will try to tackle them one at a time. I made a few notes to myself. I note that he mentioned some of the federal initiatives and some of the dollars that they are putting forward.

We are talking about monies coming from the federal government of the United States to the states, a huge, big block of cash, and here we are looking for a 60-40 kind of split out of the federal government and somehow we should be participating in that.

You have a big pot of money from the federal government of the U.S., giving it to all the states and saying, here it is, we want to subsidize you. Now, here we are expected somehow to split this amount of money, Mr. Speaker. We are supposed to kick in all of a sudden and compete with the United States. The U.S. government, the federal government has provided all of the states with all this cash and somehow we are supposed to compete with that.

The onus is on the federal government. The federal government should be coming forward with their money and trying to address this situation the same way the federal government in the United States addressed the situation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a couple of comments have been made, and all due respect to the member from Emerson. I know that he has his heart in the right place. I know he is thought

highly of by a number of people from his constituency, but he is on the wrong track when he starts talking about this member from Swan River that is the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk).

This Minister of Agriculture is the best Minister of Agriculture in the last 13 years of the province of Manitoba. We should all stand up and commend her for the hard work that she has been doing ever since the meeting we have had and the meeting they had previous with all ministers across this country trying to tackle a very difficult problem.

No one is saying that this is easy. The farmers in Manitoba and the farmers across the country understand this, that there is a real problem in agriculture today. This problem just did not happen overnight. So it is a difficult issue.

I can tell you that this Minister of Agriculture from Swan River speaks with passion, speaks with sincerity. She cares about farmers. That is felt throughout the agricultural community, not only in the southeast, where my constituency is, but right across the province of Manitoba. They know her heart is in the right place and she will not wave the flag and buckle in, because she knows that the moment you do that, the federal government, next time around, and there will be a next time, the crumbs will be fewer and far between.

So this Minister of Agriculture is doing a great job. I know that, you know, Mr. Speaker, we had an all-party committee because the Premier of this province and the Minister of Agriculture felt that in April 2001 that the Government hold a series of public meetings across the province to hear from farmers, to find out from farmers how they feel about the issues related to agriculture.

At that time what did we say and what did we hear? The member from Emerson would agree. What did we hear from those farmers that came and presented? There is a lot of talk, too much talk.

When we take a look at what was moved by the member from Emerson, once again what we

are talking about is when it says: "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba direct the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food"; and "that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to ask the federal government to consider organizing a national summit"—you know, so does this mean more talk, more talk, more talk? We heard in April 2001 many farmers in Manitoba are tired of that.

We have an opportunity here. The federal government is feeling the heat. We have an opportunity if we stand together and stand united and not wave the flag, as has been mentioned by the member from Swan River and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). We have an opportunity here to make some real gains for the farmers of Manitoba. That is what this is all about. Regrettably, we cannot, I believe, anyway, in my humble opinion, wave the flag right now, because there are still negotiations happening, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, here we have a series of leaks. Well, surprise, surprise. On a Monday they start talking about, well, there could be a possible transition to deal with risk. Then on Tuesday we start talking about an environmental action pot of money that might be there. Then on Wednesday we start talking about, gee, maybe there is money there for drought and then maybe, oh, we will have \$70-75 million for rural development and maybe co-operatives.

Well, should we be surprised that the federal government starts leaking out these pots of money, knowing how desperate our farmers are and really how desperate some politicians are across this country to get something for farmers? We cannot put up the flag and say surrender, we surrender, just give us what you think is right.

We are telling the federal government, you are far short on what you are offering farmers. You are expecting us to come forward with 40 percent. You know, I mean, this is ridiculous. We are talking about what the federal government has done in the United States, and we are attempting to address this and the feds are trying to pull us into this deal.

Mr. Speaker, this is regrettable because we are going to be put on the hook by being pulled into this argument that somehow, because they are offering little tidbits that would appeal to a lot of different governments across the country, we are supposed to be yanked into this plan, this grandiose plan that the federal government has.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member from Emerson mentioned: What has this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) done; what has this Government done for farmers? I know there are other speakers who are going to follow me, and I hope that my colleagues who are going to speak with regard to this issue will expand. Well, what have we done? I am trying to think of what we have done. This Minister of Agriculture brought in a program called Bridging Generations, transferring farmland to the next generation. It is a tremendous program. Now this is something that we know that there has to be a transition phase with regard to agriculture. So this Minister of Agriculture proposed a bridging of generations, and I believe it is going to be successful in years to come. I guess the proof will be in the pudding, and it will show that it has been successful.

Also, \$25 million state-of-the-art facility at the U of M, the nutraceutical centre, dealing with diversification, trying to get farmers to address, you know, how can they diversify their activities. By doing this at the U of M, what we are trying to do is get a nutraceutical centre that we can address some of those diversification challenges that we have.

* (17:30)

Simplot processing plant. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) should be on top of where the Golden Boy used to be and screaming and saying how great this Minister of Agriculture is, because here you have a \$120-million potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie. That is tremendous. I mean, it is tremendous, and that is what this Minister of Agriculture has done. That is what this Minister of Agriculture has delivered on.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this issue is one that, regrettably, we can be very, very partisan on. I guess, in many ways, when I take a look at my remarks that I have made about the Crow

rate and how Mulroney started it and then the Liberals finished it off, about removing three-quarters of a billion dollars from the farm economy, it is something that members speaking on this feel with passion. They have spoken to the agricultural community, and they understand how hard pressed financially farmers are.

It is hard nowadays when you hear people at those April 2001 hearings, which I can say that the member from Dauphin chaired that committee and he did a great job of doing it because the emotions were high. You are talking about people's livelihood. You are talking about someone wanting to pass on their farm to one of their children, and they feel they are not doing it. They feel that they are better off just to sell the farm, give the money to their children and say: Go to university, go to that new community college that the Government is building in downtown Winnipeg, get a trade and you will be better off because you just do not know. Things have changed so much in agriculture, you are better off doing that. That is the best thing I could do is give you your inheritance ahead of time and go to university or community college. It is really regrettable to hear that, Mr. Speaker, because agriculture is the cornerstone of what this province was built on. We want to see agriculture be successful, and this Government cares about agriculture and cares about the farming community and all those communities that are dependent on farmers.

So, you know, this is a case where this issue can become very, very emotional for a lot of people in rural Manitoba. At those April 2001 public hearings that were held, I mentioned how the member from Dauphin did such a great job of chairing that, because people were very emotional, gave a lot of testimony, heartfelt testimony and wanted some action, and they wanted people to be able to move ahead and do something for the farming community. I know many members that are very fortunate to be representatives of those farmers, and the people from rural Manitoba know how serious this is.

Mr. Speaker, I just feel that, at this point, again, personally speaking, that I really feel that the federal government has a real onus on that federal government to come forward once and for all and do something for agriculture. Not

only Manitoba, but for other provinces. I mean, we have seen them, you know, they have cut the amount of money they used to give in health care from 50 percent down to 15 percent. We see education, we see a lot of areas where the federal government is just bailing out and expecting the Province to come forward and pick up the tab. I know that this is another one of those issues where they are expecting us by putting what I would say is media pressure, political pressure, by first of all the leaks on what their program entailed and then finally making an announcement and saying, you know, take it or leave it.

Now, the federal government, in many, many different areas we are certainly trying to work with them, we are trying to be co-operative with them, but this is an area where this Government and this Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) have said, you know, this is something we cannot do, we cannot accept these crumbs. You are expecting us somehow now to come to the table and look into the Treasury and find these dollars. So it is really regrettable.

I know, as I mentioned, the member from Emerson is bringing this forward because he does care for agriculture. It is his view. It is not my view. I beg to differ on this particular position, but I am telling you that there are many, many agricultural communities as well as farmers in this province of Manitoba that trust this Minister of Agriculture, trust the Premier, and where they are going in the negotiations with the feds that have taken place over a number of years, they understand that, yes, sometimes you have to when you are involved in negotiations to be able to take a stand. This is the case with this particular agreement that we are looking at or that the federal government would like us to agree.

So I know others want to speak, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to put a couple of comments on the record. I thank you very much for the time.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): It is absolutely incredible. Sometimes I follow speaking the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner). I say that I am amazed at some of the wild and wacky things that he puts on the record

around here. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess I am just starting to get used to the Member for Emerson putting forward the most ridiculous propositions, the most ridiculous positions.

I want to put a quote on the record. Let us see if anyone in the House here can tell me who this quote belongs to. Asked if the provinces would be hurting their farmers more by not signing the deal, this was the quote: The federal government is holding farmers hostage here. It is not the provinces. Was that the Member for Emerson?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Struthers: No, sadly, it was not. This is a good quote. This hits the nail right on the head, does it not, Mr. Speaker? You would hope that the Member for Emerson could be quoted saying that. You would hope it would.

Maybe it was the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) who really could be standing up for Manitoba farmers by saying, it is not the provinces, the federal government is holding farmers hostage. It could have been the Leader of the Official Opposition, but, no, it is not his quote either.

Maybe it was the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). He represents a lot of farmers. The Member for Turtle Mountain and I got elected the same day back in '95. I think maybe that he might actually believe this is true, but the Member for Turtle Mountain did not say this either. What about any of the other members across the way who represent so many farmers here in Manitoba. Was it from any of the members across the way? Not a single one of them.

Do you know where you have to go to find this kind of leadership? You have to go to the Province of Nova Scotia. Agriculture Minister for Nova Scotia, Ernie Fage, asked if the provinces would be hurting the farmers more by not signing the deal. Fage said the federal government is holding farmers hostage here, it is not the provinces. That was the Minister of Agriculture in Nova Scotia.

I am sure glad he is representing the Member for Emerson's constituents. I am sure glad he is representing those farmers who will vote next time in Turtle Mountain, because those members sure are not. Those members want us to take a white flag and run it right up the mast pole out here in front of the Legislature. They want us to look at George Bush and say, you know, Mr. Bush, you win. You win, Mr. Bush. You win, Mr. Chrétien. You go ahead, Mr. Chrétien, Mr. Prime Minister. You put in 60 percent of what you are responsible for. That is just fine with us. That is just fine with the Tory party of Manitoba. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Let us see here, maybe we can find a quote here that belongs to one of the Conservative members of this Legislature. How about this one: I cannot imagine that provinces and farm leaders today are encouraged to sign this agreement given what is in it. Maybe that would make sense. That is a good quote. Maybe that is something that the members opposite should listen to and learn from. Maybe they can be saying those quotes, too, and maybe they can be right in step with what the farm community in Manitoba wants to hear, what the farmers of this province want members of our Legislature to be saying. Sadly, though, that, again, was not something that members opposite came up with. That was Clay Serby, the minister in Saskatchewan. So we have ministers in Nova Scotia and in Saskatchewan. They know where it is at. They know what the farm community needs and they have courage enough to stand up and say what is on their minds.

It is absolutely interesting. It is amazing the coincidence of this resolution coming forward today from the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), who is here in the House today with this resolution, when our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), at this very moment, is strongly putting forward Manitoba's position at a meeting of Ag ministers in Halifax. So here we are. This is all too typical for this Opposition. On the one hand, there is our minister going to bat for farmers, telling the federal government that they have to take responsibility for their 100 percent of agriculture and 100 percent of this trade injury, and what is the Opposition doing? What is it that the Opposition is doing? Here is

the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) whining and carping behind your back while she is out there fighting for farmers.

* (17:40)

The Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism and Sport (Mr. Lemieux) referenced the all-party committee, the standing committee that I chaired, and went to Beausejour and to Dauphin and to Brandon and to Winnipeg. Two things struck me above all else when that committee travelled Manitoba and listened to farmers and listened to people who lived in small rural communities. One was the commitment and the determination of farmers in Manitoba and the commitment they have to rural Manitoba, the commitment they have to providing the world with food and their commitment to keeping small communities alive and well.

The other thing I noticed was the antics of the Member for Emerson throughout that whole process trying his best to undermine what we were doing, trying his best to score political points at the expense of the farmers that were presenting in Brandon, and presenting in Dauphin, and presenting in Beausejour, and presenting in Winnipeg.

What struck me the most was that gap between the farm community and their commitment, and the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) and his colleagues from across the way who wanted only to score cheap political points. They undermined the position of this Government then. It undermined the position of farm organizations then and it undermines these positions today. I want to encourage the members opposite to finally, once and for all, on these issues, put aside their little partisan thinking and step forward as legislators of the province of Manitoba, representing people who really are hurting because of a U.S. farm trade action.

I heard earlier today the Member for Emerson yakking across while the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) was speaking, trying to tell us that this is not a trade injury issue. From the very first time this came up in the House, that very same Member for Emerson

stood up in Question Period when all the press were up there to see this and asked our Premier (Mr. Doer) to tell us what the hurt on Manitoban farmers is because of this trade injury, because of this bill that the American president was about to sign at that time. How come the member from Emerson thinks that he can have both sides of both legs come down on each side of a fence?

An Honourable Member: Because he is a Liberal.

Mr. Struthers: One of my colleagues here says that he thinks he is a Liberal. He is defending the Liberals in Ottawa. He is saying it is okay for the Liberals to take 40 percent of what they are responsible for and shuffle it onto the provinces.

An Honourable Member: Maybe he wants to become a senator, Stan.

Mr. Struthers: The senator from Emerson. Did the member from Emerson also think it was okay for the federal Liberal government, and the Mulroney government before them, to shuffle off health care and post-secondary education spending, as well? Was it okay then? What is next, Mr. Speaker? Is the member going to stand over there and say that we should now pick up 40 percent of national defence in this country? That is a federal responsibility. He is saying that, on the one hand, we should be happy that the feds have dumped 40 percent of their responsibility on us in agriculture. Is he saying the same thing for national defence? Should we kick in 40 percent of the total bill for the new helicopters that the federal Liberal government might buy someday? Should we be putting in 40 percent of the helicopters, the executive planes that the Prime Minister bought; does he want us to put 40 percent into that, too? I have an idea. Maybe we can provide 40 percent of the bailout of the Canadian airlines. Maybe that is what the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) wants as well.

If the member from Emerson is going to be consistent in his argument, then that is exactly the argument that he should be making. It is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. It is ridiculous for us to consider bailing out the federal government. It is

ridiculous for us to go down that road. We agitate against that all the time because we cannot afford to be picking up the tab every time the federal government, whether they be the Tories or the Liberals, unilaterally decide that they are going to save some money.

We owe it to our farm community in our little towns and our villages and this whole province, which depends on agriculture, our biggest industry, our most important industry, in my mind. We owe it to them to stand up for them, not fold up our cards, not take our toys and go home, like the member from Emerson wants us to do. A summit? This is the same member, the Member for Emerson, who began his Estimates this year with a two-day waste of time, arguing over whether we are going to go line by line or whether we were going to do the Estimates globally. Big deal. The farmers of Manitoba were putting in their crops. They were seeding. By the time the member from Emerson got through with arguing about that, they had moved on from seeding to spraying.

Mr. Speaker, that is not serving the people of Manitoba. That is not serving Manitoba's farmers. That was a complete waste of time. The member wants us to talk some more. He wants to get a summit together so that we can talk some more about what we should do. We know exactly what we should do, and we decided that in this House, with the support, I must point out, supposed support of the members opposite, which I believe included the Member for Emerson. We passed a resolution in this House. We passed it unanimously. We passed a resolution that said the federal government should not be let to weasel off the hook on this one. We said that this is something that is going to hurt our farmers, and we said it is something that is a federal responsibility, and, you know, we said we would stick together on this. Where is the Member for Emerson? Where is the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire)? Where are they? Are they backing off from this now? Are they? Are they, again, going to opt for the cheap political partisan politics points rather than representing the farm community? It sure appears that way to me.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this farm bill is a huge challenge to our farm

community. It is going to hurt. This time, above any other time, we need to be united. We need Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to know, when our Ag Minister and when our Premier (Mr. Doer) look the federal government eyeball to eyeball and say you should do your part and fulfil your jurisdiction and your responsibility, that Mr. Chrétien cannot look over their shoulders and see this loyal Opposition trying to play politics. It is time we stood together. It is time we stood together united.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to just conclude by saying that I am very proud of the work that our Agriculture Minister is doing. I have an infinite amount of confidence that she is going to put Manitoba's farmers first and she is going to tell the federal government that.

I would encourage all members of this Legislature to support her in her quest to get what is best for Manitoba farmers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It gives me pleasure to speak to this resolution.

We have heard a lot of concern, I guess, by some of the members in the Government today, backbenchers who have spoken to this, and ministers who have spoken to this bill or to this private member's resolution.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why we would need to consider holding a national summit on ways to examine development and rural development and bettering of the agricultural industry in Canada. There would be no concern at all, I should think, by any member of this Legislature to offer to have our Clerk of the Legislative Assembly send a copy of such a resolution to the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, as we have done with the committee that was held across Manitoba in the spring of 2001. But there are a number of issues that concern me with regard to the present Government and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), and the fact that there may not be consistency that I would like to see as a farmer in Manitoba coming out of this minister.

* (17:50)

I have heard a lot of our members and her colleagues today. Of course they back her in her efforts to try and promote some better agriculture. Of course, she went to Whitehorse, you know, a year ago and agreed to the accord that they have spoken to on agriculture. From that had come the five pillars of agriculture that we see: Ottawa, Agri-Food and agriculture and environment and a lot of other sectors dealing with agriculture in Ottawa today. We know that there are groups meeting with regard to the five pillars around the sustainability of our agricultural industry. We know that the minister has given some lip-service to supporting that whole process.

I guess we have had several ministers' meetings since. Our Minister of Agriculture, today, is away for the next few days in Halifax meeting with her counterparts from across Canada. Of course, the federal government's timing of announcing the federal agriculture package that they put out last week, if you will, is to somewhat placate the agriculture community in regards to trying to give the perception that there has been something offered to the farmers of Canada in this package. They have used numbers like 5.2 billion, and, if the Province participates, 8.1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we have an interim package, here, that could be as much as a billion if the provinces participate in this. Of course, many farmers will see a package come out to them this year if those dollars do accrue, whether the provinces have indicated that they will be part of it or not.

Of course, the Prime Minister, on national television, indicated that for those provinces who do not participate, he will just put his 60 percent out and the farmers in those areas will just go short. They will not be part of it. They will not be in a competitive situation. Of course, those provincial governments will just, you know, show their clear loss for their agricultural support for their farmers in those regions. That is where our provincial government is at today. I daresay our Minister of Agriculture is in Ottawa hammering the tables, trying to say that this should be, that any kind of trade injury should be 100% federal government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our members on this side of the House would agree that trade injury could be looked at 100 percent by the federal government. But this government of the day in Manitoba has completely missed the boat. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture of Canada have stood up in front of Canada, in front of the nation, on national television and news releases and indicated that the package that they have coming forward has nothing to do with trade injury. Well, we know that it is still not meeting the needs of the trade injury.

If the member from Dauphin had been listening to my honourable member from Emerson, he would have understood that what the member was saying in this resolution is that there is still a trade injury out there, and that Ottawa has not addressed it. Why did Ottawa do that?

Well, No. 1, they do not have to fight with their American counterparts. They can still be in agreement to reduce subsidies overall across Canada and across the world without getting into conflict with their American neighbours, you know, sort of a backdoor approach to really dealing with the issue. Of course, they can also come across to Canada and say that the provinces do not have to participate; you do not have to participate in this thing because it is not a trade injury program. But members in the Government opposite today have failed to realize the difference between the two programs and what the federal government is meaning by their process.

Now I know that they have given us some solace that our provincial Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has passion, and that she has heart, and that she will not buckle already, but, Mr. Speaker, that has not been her record. I went to Ottawa with this Minister of Agriculture to try and seek support for farmers and came home empty-handed. When the federal government offered a package of support for farmers in western Manitoba because of the flood of 1999 in our western Manitoba and, in fact, other regions of Manitoba as well, she rolled the dice and said to the federal people that we will not participate in that program. So she rolled the dice, went double or nothing, and got nothing.

That is why farmers in Manitoba today are skeptical about this Government's understanding of the agricultural industry and what the federal government has put before us today. That is why they do not support this Government in regard to where it is at with its agricultural program. They have seen this Government, and they have seen its inaction and its lack of understanding for the kinds of—now we all wish that this was a trade injury program and that the federal government had had to come up with 100% payment in this whole area, but they have not come up with it. They just do not understand where they are at.

I do not know whether the government of the day does not understand the five pillars of the packages that Ottawa is dealing with, but I think that they are going to lead farmers to believe that there is a billion-dollar package and a payout mechanism in a short-term manner, done for a year, and that farmers will think that that is what they are going to get for the next five years down the road. But that is not the case at all.

This package, the interim package that they talk about, will only be a one-year package. It will have a billion dollars; it will get paid out similar to some of the packages that they have done in Canada before.

But it has nothing to do with the five pillars of agriculture that are going to be beginning in this whole process of the \$3.4 billion that they are putting forth, beginning in the year 2003, which divides that package into the number of the areas that the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) was talking about.

You know, of course, in my responsibilities in rural development and as the previous environment critic, we will see the federal government break those packages of dollars down over five years between five different programs and there will be a little bit of money paid out to each of those areas, and we do not know what kind of cross-compliance farmers in Manitoba are going to have to be participating in in order to get any kind of money out of those programs, whether it is going to combine crop insurance and NISA and put dollars into those, top it up, or make it more difficult for farmers to participate

in those. I think that those are just some of the issues that we need to deal with, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, having had some experience on some of these national committees in the past, I know how the federal government tries to drive some of those agendas.

I rather doubt that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has found support amongst her members across Canada for trying to turn the government's mind around on this. No doubt. As I have said twice now, we would like to see a trade injury package put together to deal with the offsets by the subsidies by our European and American counterparts, particularly the Americans in this case, but that is not likely what she is going to be able to do in Ottawa, or in Halifax.

So will our minister do what she did at the meeting in Toronto a number of years ago, or after she was first elected, and leave the meeting with her tail between her legs? Will she just up and take off and leave Manitoba farmers out to dry, or in the wet, whichever the case may be? We do not believe that she will stand her ground and be able to have the passion that this Government says that she will have.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I guess there are some points to be made here. It is the same old union mentality that this group is coming with, and they will sacrifice Manitoba farmers to prove that point. I have to congratulate you; you sure showed the feds. We may have no farmers left, and you will have proved your point, but those are difficult circumstances to tell young farmers in Manitoba that this is your bottom line.

I think that I would like to save some words for further debate on this issue at other times. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to put a few seconds on the record here, and, I must say, as a new politician, that I can certainly see where the cynicism that you see in the public towards politicians comes about. This is a prime example of blatant misrepresentation, I would think, and it starts right in Washington with the President, who supposedly is the leader of the free world and has a

free trade agreement with Canada here. We are supposed to be working together on, you know, doing away with trade barriers, and what does he do? He comes out of the blue with a \$190-billion trade bill that has basically thrown the whole free-trade mentality, or approach, into total chaos. It starts with him.

At the next level we deal with the Prime Minister of Canada here—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 25, 2002

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