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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Guizar	The Maples	Liberal
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 8, 1992

The House met at 8 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HOUSING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This evening, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Housing.

Does the honourable Minister of Housing have an opening statement?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Yes, I do.

I am pleased, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to present the 1992-93 spending Estimates for Manitoba Housing. In this fiscal year, we are proposing expenditures of about \$50.1 million, an increase of about 4.6 percent over last year. These figures reflect the transfer of responsibility for landlord/tenant affairs to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and apart from this, the department responsibilities remain virtually unchanged.

My department looks forward to meeting the challenges of continuing to work with Manitobans in support of the building of new quality housing to meet their needs and preserving the current housing stock. However, in the field of social housing development we are facing some serious difficulties. I regret many of these problems have arisen because of the steady decrease in recent years of financial support from the federal government.

In 1992, there will be a 21 percent decrease in new federal social housing allocations. Additional cuts scheduled in 1993 and 1994—and perhaps cuts is not the most appropriate word—but the cap on CMHC expenditures scheduled for 1993 and 1994 will produce a total effect of about a 50 percent reduction from the 1991 base. That is on top of a 35 percent reduction in the unit allocations from 1989 and 1990. So we are significantly reduced. I think in 1988 we delivered something close to almost 1,000 units, and we will be lucky to deliver 200 at the end of this current period.

Not only does this loss in support make it much harder to add to our social housing stock, it also means fewer jobs, as much as 1,500 person-years of employment during the prime construction season, which has always been an important factor in strengthening Manitoba's annual economic performance. Notwithstanding these reductions, a high demand for housing continues from many groups for assistance through these programs.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the potential of reducing the program to the point where, in many provinces, it will be uneconomical to keep it alive, period. If the number of housing units falls below a certain figure, the associated cost to the program may destroy their efficiency and viability for delivery purposes.

Besides the constructions losses, Ottawa has also reduced assistance for housing repair programs, as we discussed this afternoon. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program has been scrapped altogether for rental property, although it remains in reduced form for homeowners.

* (2005)

This program has been an important means of maintaining existing inner-city housing rental stock. Manitoba was disappointed over the way that the federal program cutbacks have been implemented. Federal-provincial housing programs were a principal agenda topic at the April meeting of provincial housing ministers. Unfortunately, the federal minister could not join us at that time.

As a result, we were unable to raise our concerns in a forum where an informative discussion could have produced beneficial results and understanding. The next meeting of housing ministers is scheduled for the end of June, and we are hoping that at this time the federal minister will be able to be there to continue those discussions.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to return now to one or two highlights of Manitoba Housing's programs and plans for the fiscal year. The transition from the former local housing authorities to the Manitoba Housing Authority will be completed in '92-93. Already we have experienced significant savings and greater efficiency as a result through

such benefits and standardizing procedures, tendering practices and a more rational organizational structure and use of resources.

Also, we have achieved savings without having to wield a heavy axe on the staff. Instead, most have been retained, and we have deployed and employed them better. We are continuing our practice of enhancing tenant involvement in the operation of housing. Last year we doubled the grants to tenants' organizations, and under the new management structure we have a branch devoted to dealing with the concerns of tenants in local communities.

This is an innovative departure from the former practice of dealing with these matters as an adjunct of ordinary property management functions. We believe it will promote greater efficiency and consistency and policy, as well as facilitating innovative initiatives at the tenant and the community levels.

We are also trying to ensure that local community involvement is encouraged through social housing advisory groups which will represent community views and concerns to the MHA. The tenant and community relations branch will work over the next few months to start up these groups.

Manitoba's social housing rental stock is getting older. Most of this housing was built in the '70s and has now reached the point where significant ongoing maintenance is required. As our housing ages the costs of modernization and improvement also mount. The challenge to my department will be to manage more efficiently in order to generate increased funds for proper maintenance of this housing stock.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased to report that we have finalized a new program arrangement that holds out great promise for senior citizens nonprofit housing. This program replaces the previous Seniors RentalStart program and will produce significant reductions in cost and risk from those associated with that program while still maintaining its best features. As before, the new arrangement will cover housing for seniors who need or wish nonprofit congregate-type housing but do not meet the federal-provincial criteria for low-income assistance.

Rather than provide grant subsidies and direct low-interest financing, the new program encourages private lenders to participate by the province providing partial loan guarantees for a limited period

of time with a maximum exposure to the province of 10 percent of project costs. By this method, not only is the risk to the province reduced, but also Manitoba Housing will no longer be subsidizing higher-income seniors housing projects while still being able to facilitate their preferred housing choices.

I might add, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that as with the previous Seniors RentalStart program, provisions exist to provide subsidies where required to qualified low-income tenants and that the program is open to nonprofit and co-ops making for good income-integrated community-based projects. I can also report that the first eligible projects are currently being finalized for approval.

We are all aware of the recessionary situation facing this country and our province in particular, and we recognize the importance of housing expenditures, not only from the standpoint of facilitating affordable housing for our people, but also as an instrument for maintaining levels of employment in our construction trades. My colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has mentioned many times that the province of Manitoba is amongst the few to keep up its level of capital programming and housing expenditures through MHRC and will continue to form a significant component of overall capital expenditures by the province.

During 1992-93, based on both projects already underway and new projects approved to date, we anticipate the expenditure of some \$15 million on modernization and improvement projects in our public housing stock. A further \$27 million will be spent on new construction projects, \$20 million of which will be directly financed by the province, but the balance of finance through private lenders on the strength of provincial guarantees.

So that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, concludes my opening remarks.

* (2010)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those comments. Does the critic from the official opposition party, the honourable member for Burrows, have any opening comments?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to thank the minister for his opening statement which I note he read. I would like to try and talk intelligibly for five minutes without reading notes this year.

An Honourable Member: That may be tough.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Burrows has the floor.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I note with interest that almost every area that the minister talked about were topics that I was planning to raise, and the one item that I was not sounds like a new program, the seniors nonprofit, and I look forward to hearing more details about that when we get to it.

I would like to talk a little bit about the government's overall housing policy since it seems that this government is cutting programs and they have also transferred responsibility for Landlord and Tenant Affairs to another department. In fact, I noticed that on several occasions the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) was the acting government House leader in the Chamber and thought maybe he needed more responsibility and so he was asked to act as acting House leader. I think part of it is explained by the Core Area Initiative expiring and many of the programs coming to an end, but in any case I would like to talk about the government's overall housing policy perhaps under Minister's Salary.

I will spend some time asking questions about Manitoba Housing Authority and the problems in the transition, and would like to hear a progress report on what is happening and where they are at now. I have some detailed questions about the internal audit at Winnipeg Housing Authority, which I raised in the Chamber. I was not satisfied with the answers that I received and would like to ask more detailed questions.

I have some concerns about the termination of the federal Co-op Housing Program, which I know the minister shares with me, but nonetheless, I would like to ask and will ask more questions about this minister's response to that federal government cutback.

We have already discussed constitutional negotiations and the possibility of housing responsibility being devolved to the provinces and the impact that will have on Manitoba. I will have some questions on that as well.

From time to time, there are issues that I think are nonpartisan, and I was going to raise one of them, and the minister already raised it. That is the problem of aging housing stock. I do not really think that has anything to do with what government is in

office, although I note that one of his predecessors was heckling me in the Chamber one day saying that his government inherited a problem in deteriorating older public housing stock. I prefer to think that it is mainly a function of age, that as housing units get older there inevitably are more and more problems.

I am pleased to see that the government plans to spend \$15 million in this area, and I would like to hear more details about how the government is coping with this problem and what the Minister of Housing and his staff are going to do in this area.

That concludes my opening statement. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable member for Burrows for those comments.

Does the critic from the second opposition party, the honourable member for The Maples, have any opening comments?

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, first of all, I just want to let the minister and the members of the committee know that this is my first time as a critic for this area. I will be just going through many areas of concern I have, and I do not pretend to let anybody know that I know everything about Housing. It is sort of a learning process for me, and I just want to ensure at least that the government's main objectives and missions which are part of this department are met. I will ensure that wherever I find some deficiencies I will be raising issues. I will just add my remarks and learn from the staff and other people who are involved in the minister's office.

Certainly, after the next session I probably will have a more fruitful discussion and I would like to probably then be more critical. However, at this stage I think I would like to express to the staff that, certainly it is going to be a learning process for me. Thank you.

* (2015)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable member for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask the minister to introduce the staff members present.

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

Mr. Ernst: If I can, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, introduce Mr. Saul Schubert, who is the Deputy Minister of the Department of Housing. Mr. Ken Cassan is here, who is the director of planning and program development. We have Mr. Henry Bos, who is the Finance and administration officer; Mr. Ron Fallis, who is the general manager of the Manitoba Housing Authority; and Mr. Roger LaFleche, who is our Personnel Director. At the back, Joan Miller, who is the Assistant to the Deputy Minister, and Brian Brown from our Finance division.

The Executive Director of the other side of the department, Mr. Julius, will join us a little bit later. It is his parents 52nd wedding anniversary today so I gave him the opportunity to go and wish them well, so he will be along shortly.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): Item 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries \$307,700.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I have quite a few questions on this page. I would like to start with the internal audit of the Winnipeg Housing Authority, if this is the appropriate page to do this.

Mr. Ernst: Well, let him ask his questions.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that at the former Winnipeg Housing Authority there were four staff who received authorization from Manitoba Housing staff on Broadway Avenue to claim overtime. They were asked to keep logs of the overtime that they worked. I also believe that a lot of the logs were made up after the fact, after the overtime was worked. The claim went in and cheques were made up amounting to approximately \$10,000, almost \$11,000, and that it was a payroll clerk who objected to this overtime being paid, and that when staff on Broadway became aware of the situation the audit was undertaken. The result of the audit is that the overtime was not paid.

I guess my first question would be: If the overtime was authorized, why was it not paid?

* (2020)

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, first of all the member's question is inconsistent. On the one hand, he said it was authorized by Broadway,

and on the other hand, he said when Broadway discovered what was happening they put a kibosh on it and they called in the auditor. So you cannot have it both ways; it is either one or the other.

Let me give you a little history of this situation. Perhaps it might settle the issue in the mind of the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). In the city of Winnipeg Housing Authority the practice of the authority was not to pay overtime. But it was a condition precedent to the job that you worked overtime if required, but there were, particularly in the maintenance area where people were called out at a variety of times during the day and night to meet certain demands and so on.

At the time that the Manitoba Housing Authority question was raised and so on, and there was some internal juggling of staff within the department, and a number of these issues were coming to the forefront, we enlisted the support—following the retirement of Mr. Keith Moffat as well who is the manager of the city of Winnipeg Housing Authority the assistant manager took over, Mr. Adrian De Porto. At that time he was asked by Manitoba Housing staff on Broadway to take on additional responsibilities over and above his management duties at city of Winnipeg Housing Authority. Those additional management responsibilities involved sponsorship projects in terms of the administration and overseeing those projects. For that, because now this is outside his scope of duties at the city of Winnipeg Housing Authority, it was determined and he was told to keep track of your hours with respect to overtime and we will deal with that issue at a later time. That was told to him by the administration on Broadway.

Subsequent to that I received a phone call in my office expressing some concerns with respect to potential overtime payments in the City of Winnipeg Housing Authority, I suppose early April would be the approximate time frame. I became concerned that something was happening there and I instructed the auditor to go to City of Winnipeg Housing Authority and to investigate the situation on my behalf. The auditor did that, subsequently reported, and we have held discussions internally amongst the auditor, myself and our senior management in the department to the point where, as I indicated to the member in the House, there was no wrongdoing. Nonetheless the policy of no overtime payment for the City of Winnipeg Housing

Authority was to be maintained and no overtime was paid.

* (2025)

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what the internal audit found and if there were any recommendations to the minister attached to it?

Mr. Ernst: The auditor found that there was a fair bit of confusion as to whether it was Mr. De Porto only who was to obtain overtime, whether there was additional staff which was to obtain overtime, whether that overtime applied to—because of the change of MHA coming on and so on and these additional units of workload were brought on as well, there was general confusion in any event as to the whole question of overtime.

The auditor found that because of the confusion, particularly on the part of Mr. De Porto, this was a gray area. I do not think there was any intent to do anything other than to follow instructions, but the instructions were not clearly understood, and quite frankly, probably should have had written direction from senior management at some point or other as well.

People were in a fairly flexible mood in attempting to see all these things come together quickly and with the minimum amount of administration in trying to sort out a number of problem areas. So that was what the auditor found. There was no wrongdoing, there was a fair bit of confusion.

However, the auditor did recommend that Mr. De Porto only now receive payment for his overtime because of the question of mishandling of the whole thing and it could have been a lot clearer and so on, it was our determination that no overtime be paid and that was accepted by Mr. De Porto without question.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am still confused. It seems normal that people are salaried, that they normally do not get paid overtime. However, you said in the case of Mr. De Porto he took on extra responsibility. In fact, I think he had responsibility for 11 sponsored seniors' buildings, so I can understand if someone is given substantially more responsibility, that overtime might be authorized. My information is that there were three other people involved and at least one of them was a salaried employee, if not all three of them, why would overtime be authorized for those three people if they were hourly employees?

Mr. Ernst: First of all, let me be very clear. No one authorized any overtime. No overtime has been

authorized. Simply, the statement was made to Mr. De Porto that he should keep track of his hours when these additional responsibilities were assigned. As I indicated, it has been very flexible and so on, but nobody has authorized any overtime. I wanted to make that clear.

Mr. Martindale: Why were people asked to keep logs of their hours if overtime was not authorized?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. De Porto misunderstood the direction he was given, and for that overtime by certain other people who were in part or not in part, as the case may be, assisting him in terms of either replacing his work while he is involved with the sponsor projects or assisting him directly with the work associated with the sponsor projects.

Mr. Martindale: So Mr. De Porto misunderstood what I believe it was Mr. Fallis said about authorizing overtime. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernst: That was the finding of the auditor. I have no reason to disbelieve it.

Mr. Martindale: We are blaming it on the front-line staff rather than on senior management in Manitoba Housing.

Mr. Ernst: Let me suggest to the member for Burrows that those are not my words, they are the words of the auditor. If you are going to question the veracity or the capability of the auditor, then say so, but do not dilly-dally around trying to suggest that somehow this was being foisted off on some front-line staff as opposed to anybody else. I did not say those words. That was what the auditor said. As a matter of fact, I am prepared to give him a copy of the auditor's report if he wants, or, at least, let him read it.

Mr. Martindale: I would be interested in having a copy of the auditor's report to read.

Mr. Ernst: I am prepared to let him read the report. I do not know that I am prepared to give it to him because, quite frankly, the way he has treated staff previously, the member for Burrows has not been aboveboard and has taken to attacking the staff on a number of occasions when I think it is inappropriate, particularly when they are not able to defend themselves. To ensure that the member for Burrows understands what the auditor said, I am quite prepared to let him read the report.

* (2030)

Mr. Martindale: Well, I appreciate the minister letting me read the report. It suggests that the

minister is vindicated; otherwise he probably would not let me read it.

I do not know what situation the minister is referring to when he says I have attacked staff. In this case, appeals were made to me because people were making allegations about unfair treatment. That was why I wanted more detail and to ask more detailed questions in Housing Estimates. I would really prefer to read it before Estimates are over, but I probably will not get that opportunity, although there are other opportunities in the Chamber I guess.

I would like to go on, then, to another topic. I am not sure that this is the correct line, but I will try anyway. The Housing department dropped what I thought was an excellent program, the Co-op HomeStart program. I am not sure why they dropped it. I do know that an evaluation was done. I requested under Freedom of Information a copy of the evaluation of the Co-op HomeStart program, and I was told that it was not complete. I find that a little strange.

I cannot understand why your department would terminate a program before the evaluation was completed. Nonetheless, I would be interested in knowing if the minister, and now I will ask the minister directly, if I could have a copy of the evaluation of the Co-op HomeStart program.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the Co-op HomeStart program was cut as a budgetary reduction measure by the government. Subsequent to that, it was determined by staff that they should conduct an evaluation study into programs to see how it did work overall, apart from the general understanding that the staff would have with working with it on a regular basis.

The expectation at the time was that because the program was cut and the fact that budgetary measures were such that we were not likely to have departmental funding restored for that program that the allocation of limited staff resources to conduct that evaluation was relatively fruitless.

As a result, the project was abandoned. No report exists with respect to the evaluation because it was never completed, mainly because the staff indicated, what was the point in continuing to spend staff time and resources on a report that was not going to result in any major benefit, because the program had been cut, and had anticipated it would remain cut from the budget.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I guess I can understand the logic of that, although I would still be interested in any parts of the evaluation that were completed. I believe that members in Co-op HomeStart projects were interviewed. Were the results of those interviews summarized and would that be available to me?

Mr. Ernst: I am advised that basically it is just raw data at this point. It was never at a point where it was analyzed and put into a format that would be suitable for analysis. So the answer I guess is no.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am disappointed, because I believe it was a good program and I am disappointed that it was eliminated. I think if there was a positive evaluation or if there was an evaluation that it could be used to argue to reinstate the program at some future date. We know that it rehabilitated vacant existing buildings and that has been important in keeping people living in the inner city in Winnipeg. I believe that all of those projects were successful, the ones that I am familiar with anyway. So I am sorry to hear that the evaluation is not available.

Mr. Ernst: I am advised also that about half of them we have had to flip into the nonprofit housing program because they were financially not viable and that there are a number of others that are presently walking a very tight rope with respect to financial viability. So that might be a very good analysis of how the program worked.

There have been a couple of success stories as well, but I think overall, if you look at the total numbers advanced through that program, it might not be terribly successful.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I hope the one that I was involved with is one of the successful ones.

Going on to another topic, is it correct that there was an official opening at the new Manitoba Housing offices on Broadway attended by approximately 300 people, a wine and cheese reception to inaugurate the new building?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us how much that reception cost?

Mr. Ernst: Approximately \$2,000 to \$2,500.

Mr. Martindale: Is this a normal event when a new building is occupied, to have a reception?

Mr. Ernst: Manitoba Housing deals with an awful lot of people in the private sector, hundreds of

different disciplines and so on. I do not know that it is a common practice or not a common practice, although I suspect it probably is. When you move into new premises, it is common practice to invite your clients, suppliers and so on to visit your new premises and to get familiar with how you find people in the building and who is doing what where and so on and to provide some refreshments, and that is exactly what happened.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the minister's staff has to be patient with my questions. For them they may not be very appropriate at times, but I just have to go through some of the questions for my own knowledge.

First of all, can the minister tell us in terms of the Executive Support staff, are there any positions which are vacant?

Mr. Ernst: We are finding the answer, but I suspect no, that there are none.

Mr. Cheema: Can the minister tell me how the decisions are made in terms of the internal audits and when you decide to auditsomebody? Are there any criteria, just on random audits through the department or, as the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was asking the question, there may be specific allegations from outside or from inside, but what are the criteria? How do you decide which part has to be audited?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the internal auditor has a cyclical audit plan that he deals with on a regular basis. I think it is every five years he hits every area in the department. In addition to that, there are a number of special projects, problem areas, something maybe identified by the Provincial Auditor in his annual review of the operations. Then problems like the one the member for Burrows referred to from time to time pop up and so we have to employ his services in those cases as well. That is generally what he does and how he goes about it.

Mr. Cheema: Can the minister tell us, for the last almost a year, have you found any major disparities within the department in terms of the internal audits done by your department? As the member for Burrows was asking the question, I will also be very interested in seeing a copy of that audit.

Mr. Ernst: No.

* (2040)

Mr. Cheema: Can the minister run through with me on this then, the chart of the department. I just want to ask him a question. What is the rule of the housing boards? Do we have housing boards anymore and, if not, when was the policy changed?

Mr. Ernst: Can you tell me which board you are referring to now? There are housing authority boards and there is the board of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am referring to the housing board in both categories. If this is not the proper place, I will wait until I go to the right page.

Mr. Ernst: I can tell you that the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation is a shell corporation. The members of the board of directors are myself, as the chairman; the deputy minister; the director of program development and support; the executive director of administration and finance, the Deputy Minister of Urban Affairs; and Mr. Clarkson from the Department of Natural Resources who is a former long time employee of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, are the members of the board.

That board exists there basically as a shell corporation in order to deal with the federal government on assistance programs. The federal government requires there be a corporation, a housing corporation, so the legislation requires that only civil servants sit on the board as well as the minister. Now, that is Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation.

The former Manitoba housing authorities, of which there were some 98, no longer exist.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, first, about the second part which the minister says they do not exist. Who is performing the function of those boards now?

Mr. Ernst: The Manitoba Housing Authority, one single housing authority under the general managership of Mr. Fallis and for the most part existing staff from former housing authorities and from the property management division of MHRC or Manitoba Housing.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, can the minister tell me when that policy was abandoned?

Mr. Ernst: The decision was made public, I believe, in February of 1991.

Mr. Cheema: Can the minister tell me what was the rationale behind such a major change in the policy? I am not criticizing, I just want to know why it was changed and if your new group of people are substituting that board. If they are the same individuals who are functioning within your department, how are they dividing up their time and how can he justify everything, whatever they are doing now, and the extra work?

Mr. Ernst: The rationale by and large was greater efficiency, better money management, standardizing tendering procedures and policies, standardizing tenancing practices which previously were erratic, to say the best, and with significant problems identified in a number of areas. So that was the rationale for doing it.

What has happened is that the former staff from the Department of Housing were transferred to the Manitoba Housing Authority, which is an arm's length situation. They are no longer civil servants, they are functioning today as the Manitoba Housing Authority, really started on May 1 this year. It has taken some time to pull it all together. There were five different unions involved. There was a number of issues that had to be straightened out, final decisions in terms of direction, branch offices and a whole variety of issues that were surrounding that whole question of the Manitoba Housing Authority, but we finally got it all sorted out, the last part being the question of the union involvement, and that was settled at the end of March, and matters proceeded from there, and by May 1 most of the staff were in place and all of the offices.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, if the minister would have a look at Schedule 2 on page 5 under the Manitoba Housing Authority, does the new board fall under that category? Where can I find the line for the new boards under the expenditure? Have they been given separate funding or are they going to function within the same parameters?

Mr. Ernst: The function of a housing authority by and large is best seen in the place you are going to see it. The functioning of a housing authority exists based on—it has a certain revenue base and it has a certain expenditure base. Unfortunately the two do not meet. The expenditure base is, generally speaking, much larger than the revenue base, so what happens is that it is subsidized, and it is subsidized through transfer payments from MHRC.

Mr. Cheema: Can the minister tell me in dollars how much is the part in terms of revenue and how much is in the expenditure part, and out of that how much is coming, as the minister said, from MHRC and how much is coming from the minister's department?

Mr. Ernst: That information is provided on page 34 of the Supplementary Estimates book. At the top, it says Rental Subsidies, for the year ending March 31, 1993, \$32,286,500. That is the net subsidy.

The other information is contained at the bottom of that page as the gross revenues and rents and gross expenditures.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I will go through those numbers. I do not want those numbers to be repeated. I was not aware that I can get access to those numbers.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Can the minister tell me if these housing boards, how are they performing functions in terms of the communities outside Winnipeg? How do you correlate everything that is happening across the province?

Mr. Ernst: We are getting a little off the topic, but because the critic is new and so on, I am prepared to accommodate him.

First of all, there is only one board, the Manitoba Housing Authority. It, at the moment, consists of the former Minister of Housing and the senior department staff. There will be, within the next month, a private sector board put into place with expertise from a variety of disciplines around the province and geographic locations and former Housing Authority experience and so on—so covering a gamut of interest—private citizens, for the most part. Their job will be to run the Housing Authority. They will be deciding, within a framework, policy directions and so on like that and operations of the Manitoba Housing Authority.

The rest of the things like the social housing advisory groups and a number of those kinds of things are new at the moment and will, over the next few months—very likely now, I guess into the fall, as we are into the prime summer vacation months—the tenant relations officers in each of the district offices job will be to go out and to liaise with tenant groups and community associations who have an interest in continuing social housing.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries \$307,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$59,500—pass.

Item 1.(c) Finance and Operations: (1) Salaries \$2,041,500.

Mr. Martindale: Under Finance and Operations, it says under objectives, to identify and appraise and acquire land necessary for delivery of building programs. Is the sale of land under Finance and Operations, as well, of land bank land?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

* (2050)

Mr. Martindale: Then, I would like an update on the Ladco deal of several years ago. I am sorry I could not find the information that I thought I had in my office, but I know that there were terms and conditions attached to that deal. I am wondering if those terms and conditions have been met, because I believe that there were time lines applied to them.

I wonder if the minister could give us an update on what has happened since the agreement was signed. I believe that land is in south St. Vital. Could the minister tell us what the current status is, and if they have met the criteria or the terms of the agreement to date?

Mr. Ernst: The time lines that the member refers to are triggered only by the start of development; in other words, once construction starts on the site, then there are certain time lines that apply.

At the present time, the property has been rezoned by the City of Winnipeg and negotiations are continuing at the moment for the finalization of the development agreement between the City of Winnipeg and the joint venture. Once that is completed, and we anticipate that to not take very much longer, there is still a decision point, and that decision point is when do you go to the market?

In current economic times, and current demands for housing particularly in the private sector, and the low numbers of new housing starts and so on, it is—well, not finalized. The determination has been not to press the issue; that there really is not a big demand in the market, and we are not going to maximize the benefit for the taxpayer until we are into a market that has some anticipated growth in it at least, anyway.

Now, that is somewhat subjective because you do not pluck these things out of the air when the demand is there. It takes some lead time in order to bring them on stream, so I guess there is some

judgment that has to take place at a time so that when—you know if the market is going to go next spring, then we will probably have to start work this fall to provide services for lots to be sold based on next spring housing starts. That decision point has not been reached yet.

Mr. Martindale: If I understand the minister correctly, no houses have been built on that property yet.

Mr. Ernst: No.

Mr. Martindale: Therefore, none of the conditions of the agreement have been triggered because there has been no development.

Mr. Ernst: While there are lots of conditions in the agreement, no time lines have been triggered as a result of the start of construction and development. Do not forget this is a joint venture between a private sector company, with a lot of expertise and a long history of good development in the city of Winnipeg, and ourselves.

The reason you go into a joint venture is to rely on the expertise of that development company, who presumably have survived all these years as a result of reading the market correctly and so on, so it is our intent to be guided to a large extent by their advice and given the current market conditions, we are not in any big hurry.

Mr. Martindale: When the minister said, we have not serviced the land yet, but if development is going to happen next spring, then servicing would have to commence sooner than that, by we, did you mean Manitoba Housing or the City of Winnipeg? Who is we in that context?

Mr. Ernst: We is the joint venture. The development company puts in the servicing in any development. That is the purpose of a development agreement with the City of Winnipeg is to determine what services go in and where and how and so on. Those services are provided by the developer and added to the cost of the land so when the lot is sold, it is sold on a fully serviced basis, with those costs then built into the purchase price of the property.

Mr. Martindale: Who pays for putting in the services?

Mr. Ernst: It is a joint cost.

Mr. Martindale: So some of the up-front costs are borne by Manitoba Housing and the developer, in this case Ladco, and those monies are recovered when the lots are sold?

Mr. Ernst: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: Is it correct that the Province of Manitoba is still going to make money on this development, that is why the land is being sold?

Mr. Ernst: The property that was purchased is a land bank, and it was not for the provision necessarily of low-income housing. It was purchased as a land bank in the mid-1970s, I guess as a hedge against rising land costs because of substantial demand that took place during that period of time. It did not work out that way but, nonetheless, that was the intent behind the purchase.

There is a substantial carrying cost to the Province of Manitoba. It is our intent that we should relieve ourselves of that carrying cost as quickly as we can, at the same time making the best deal we can for the property.

It was determined that was a joint-venture development. We called for tenders. It was subsequently negotiated. This all occurred before my time as the minister but, nonetheless, that is where we are at the present time. We are awaiting a reasonable market in which to proceed. We are not about to invest millions of dollars in services in the ground and have them sit there with no revenue coming back.

Mr. Martindale: My recollection is that when the agreement was signed, the NDP criticized the agreement because there was nothing in it requiring the developer or the province to set aside land for social housing. I think I recall that the minister said that on the other hand there was nothing prohibiting social housing being developed. Could you tell me if there are any plans to set aside land for co-op or nonprofit or seniors housing?

Mr. Ernst: First of all, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the NDP criticize everything. There is nothing they do not criticize. As a matter of fact, we get gloom and doom daily in this place from the NDP constantly.

As a matter of fact, we had a situation this afternoon where in fact we had an excellent program involving a number of youths, 6,500-and-some-odd youth who are represented by the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), and they criticized that. It was unbelievable. We had a great success story and a program that was of significant benefit to the youth of Manitoba, and the NDP dumped all over it.

I am not surprised that the NDP criticized this agreement, because that is all they can seem to be able to do is criticize. They do not seem to have any kind of constructive ideas at all, particularly the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who is constantly criticizing everything under the sun and has not come up with a constructive idea since I have known him.

Apart from that, there are in fact in the rezoning plan for the development, multiple sites. Those multiple-family sites are available to anyone who wishes to acquire them to construct a project. If there is money available, and if there are people interested, and if somebody wants to build a project on that site, and if there is money, say, available from our department or another department to deal with that, then a project likely will occur there. There are an awful lot of ifs attached to the project.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that was an interesting speech, especially since the minister moved a friendly amendment to my resolution in the Chamber today and we voted on it and it passed. There are occasions when his party and my party agree on things, contrary to what he just said.

I suspect, though, that what he is talking about is a fundamental difference, and that is that we believe in social housing. I think if our government had been the government of the day that we would have written into the agreement that land must be set aside for social housing, because we have a commitment to nonprofit and co-op housing that I think our government would have made a much higher priority than his government.

It is interesting that he said there are a lot of ifs in this multiple-unit zoning in part of the site, so he cannot really predict whether or not there will be any social housing or nonprofit housing of any kind. We are disappointed that will not happen. We will watch and see what happens, but it almost looks as if the minister is predicting that there will not be, because he says there are so many ifs involved.

* (2100)

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if some day in the long, far off future the member for Burrows ever happens to get into government and then ever happens to have some involvement in the real estate industry in Manitoba in general and then happens to get involved in housing, he will discover that there are certain criteria that have to be met, no matter what kind of project, social housing or not.

One of them is maximum unit price. When you look at the cost—the cost, never mind the profit—the cost of land in this kind of a situation in a prime subdivision area where you are going to get significant value for the land, then the cost may be prohibitive in terms of maximum unit price. The taxation on it, because it is in a prime residential neighbourhood, may well drive the real estate taxes on a project there way out of proportion to other sites that are available.

There are a number of factors that have to be addressed when you look at—it is not simply good enough to say, yes, we will give 20 percent of that subdivision to social housing. There are an awful lot of factors that are associated with it, financial factors and others, that govern whatever anybody does. I do not care what political party is in office, you have to address those, because you are not going to get CMHC funding unless you do. Without CMHC funding, the whole thing is in a cocked hat. There is not enough money in Manitoba to carry on a program of any significance at all without having CMHC as a funding partner, no matter how limited they restrict their resources.

There is some pretty basic understanding that is required before you can simply say, well, if we were in government, we would have set aside a whole bunch of stuff for social housing because we believe in it. Well, you can believe in it all you want. I can believe in it all I want. The fact of the matter is, you have to meet certain financial guidelines and operating procedures or it is not going to happen.

The intent, I think, is to provide the maximum number of social housing units for the dollars available. In order to do that, you have to seek out wherever you can the best opportunities for dealing with that, and that is what we do in the Department of Housing.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I would relish the opportunity to be the Minister of Housing and to find out more about multiple-unit prices and all the problems, and we will hope that is in two years rather than eventually, as the minister suggests. We will have to wait and see what the electors in Manitoba have to say about that.

On this page, we have the—[interjection] Well, as long as the Liberals vote with the Conservatives in the House, we will not have to worry about an election, will we?

On this page, we have the executive director's office. I believe the executive director for Finance and Operations has joined us. Is that correct?

On the bottom of the page, one of the expected results is to continue to expand affirmative action opportunities and meet target group goals. One concern I have is that when staff are laid off, and I believe approximately 200 staff were laid off in housing authorities when the new Manitoba Housing Authority was established, quite often people without seniority are the first to be laid off. In this case, I believe there were four or five unions involved, so it would be my understanding that most of the staff were unionized, so the seniority principles would be followed.

Can the minister tell us what the effect has been on affirmative action as the result of staff layoffs? My concern is that visible minorities, women, handicapped people, aboriginal people may have been affected by staff layoffs. I do not have any evidence of that, but I would like to ask the minister if that has happened or not.

Mr. Ernst: The Civil Service Commission guidelines with respect to the matters raised by the member for Burrows do not apply to the Manitoba Housing Authority because they are not civil servants. However, it is our intention that they will apply because we think they are valuable and should apply.

In exact terms, we cannot answer as to how many natives, women, disabled or other targeted groups may or may not have been affected. We do not think in general terms that they were more or less affected than anybody else, but we do not have definitive information on that at the moment to be able to provide a direct answer.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister clarify, did you say that staff in Manitoba Housing Authority are not civil servants?

Mr. Ernst: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: Perhaps the minister could expand on that. If they are not civil servants, does that mean that they do not work for the Province of Manitoba, they work for the Housing Authority?

Mr. Ernst: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: Since the minister has someone in Personnel staff who is present here, could his staff find out for me, and provide at a future time, any data that they do have about how the layoffs have affected the groups of people that I mentioned?

The minister said, in general terms, they are not aware of anything, but could I ask the minister to ask his staff to look into this and report to me at a future time?

Mr. Ernst: I am not going to request them specifically to undertake that work. They are busy enough at the present time trying to get on with the operations. We still have 40 or 50 vacancies in the Manitoba Housing Authority that we have to deal with, and there are a number of Personnel issues as a result of the changes to MHA, so specifically I am very reluctant to request, you know stop everything to do this kind of an analysis. We have limited staff available to us to undertake this work in any event.

However, during the course of the next year or so, a number of these kinds of analysis are intended to be looked at and when that information comes available, I would be happy to provide that to the member.

I can give you a little synopsis. For instance, five of the nine district managers in rural Manitoba are female; two of four in the city of Winnipeg are female. In terms of visible minorities, natives and the like, we do not have definitive information as I indicated, but we do employ a number of people in a variety of social categories, cultural categories.

* (2110)

Mr. Martindale: Well, I can appreciate that the staff are busy interviewing. I was told it was going to be an around-the-clock operation for a couple of weeks. I also appreciate his offer to do it eventually, and I would accept his suggestion of a one-year time frame. If between now and Housing Estimates time next year, if the minister's staff could provide the answers to that, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Ernst: As I indicated, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, say in the course of events, and presumably by next year, I am not going to give a firm commitment because God only knows when we are going to get into Estimates next year. If we happen to be first up, for instance, in the Estimates process that could well be in early spring or late winter in which case we would be a long way away from a one-year time frame. So we will attempt to conduct an analysis of these things as we go through our regular work. I am sure that by next year sometime, we will have the appropriate information.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(c) Finance and Operations (1) Salaries \$2,041,500.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the minister tell me, in terms of comparison with other departments—in this whole department you are spending about \$51 million. I see a lot of staff here and other administration, managerial positions, professional and technical support staff. Can you tell me where this Department of Housing falls in terms of the rest of the departments in the government, how much money we are spending?

Mr. Ernst: We have about 130 staff or thereabouts in Manitoba Housing. We are the third or fourth smallest department in the government and, while \$51 million represents our net expenditure, gross expenditures are in the area of \$180 million a year.

We are building a variety of projects and so on, carrying out expenditures in a variety of areas. So what you see in the Estimates reflects the net cost to the government, but there is a substantial gross expenditure cost associated with the operations of the department.

Mr. Cheema: I was having a look at chart No. 7 in terms of the staff. In 1988 we had almost 170 people working then; 168 in 1990; and now we are up to 131, as the minister has said. Can the minister tell me why there is such a major shift? I mean, was there mismanagement at first, mismanagement in the previous years, or something else has happened which the minister would like to share with us?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to tell you that it is the phenomenally efficient Minister of Housing that has been able to organize this into a much tighter unit with sleek lines and very efficient staff. I would like to tell you that. However, the fact of the matter is that program reductions over time have caused the reduction in staff.

Mr. Cheema: I am not going to question the ability of staff. Without any question, the department individuals do their best, but the question here is: Why is there a major shift? I do not think I have got the answer from the minister.

Mr. Ernst: We have, over a period of time, changed our operations somewhat. There have been some Co-op HomeStart and other Seniors RentalStart programs. There are, oh, eight or 10 programs that one time or another have changed over a period of time. The staff that were delivering those have either been absorbed into other departments or are simply not required any longer. Transfer of staff from the Landlord and Tenant Affairs Division went

from the Department of Housing to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs last year. So there are a number of reasons why the difference.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the minister tell me, even when we were going on page 10 and 12, and now the same thing here in terms of Communications, there is always some funding provided. Can the minister tell us, where do we spend that kind of money, and how can you have Supplies and Communications almost every year the same? In operations, when you are dealing with the day to day changes, how can you set a specific number? I know the minister is laughing and saying it is the budget, but it seems very odd that one could predetermine that this much money you are going to spend anyway. I just want to know how you can determine that.

Mr. Ernst: First of all, I think if you remember in 1991, the Communications staff from all departments were consolidated under the Department of Culture. The staff were consolidated there, but the funding for the staff and their related expenditures were left in the departments for the year 1991. They simply, I think, estimated the amount of expenditure from the year before, that is why it is the same; brought it forward into '91; left it in the department, even though the staff were gone to the centralized Communications division; and then subsequently this year, the funding was transferred into that department.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, so the minister is saying all the communication, whatever has to go to the public is done through the central office, as with the other departments, so we do not have a specific person. Under the previous NDP administration, there were a lot of communicators all over the place, so that has been corrected. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Mr. Cheema: Thank you. That is all.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item (a) Administration: (1) Salaries.

Mr. Martindale: A couple of more questions on this page. I appreciate the minister's honesty in saying that the reason for the reduction in staff is the reduction in programs, and he said, eight or 10 programs have been changed. I think more accurately dropped. That I believe proves the contention that I made right at the beginning that a

significant number of programs have been eliminated in Housing.

I have a question. Since we were talking about the Ladco deal, I believe there was a proposal called for land in The Maples that was in the newspaper recently. I wonder if the minister could tell us what is in the proposal call. How much land is involved?

Mr. Ernst: First of all, MHRC developed a number of years ago a project called Meadows West, located on the north side of Inkster and the west side of Keewatin. Adjacent to the north of that property is Stage II of that development. The Meadows West first phase is predominantly completed. To the north of that is an undeveloped parcel of about 110 acres. To the east of that is a privately held land presently owned by a bank.

There was a proposal came forward from a private development company who was prepared to buy the property owned by the bank, but in order to develop it, required the co-operation and expenditure of quite a bit of money by MHRC to fund certain joint servicing requirements for the combined site. Appreciate that you are reaching the outer limits of development potential in the city of Winnipeg just to the north of this site. There was a land drainage lake required, some regional street improvements required and some other servicing required that was going to cost MHRC a lot of money on a local improvement basis.

We proposed that we would invite proposals from interested parties to offer their suggestions as to how these things might occur, and on what basis, and at what cost and what benefit to Manitoba Housing as the owner of the property. We are awaiting those. When they come in, we will analyze them and after we have analyzed them, we will come to a conclusion.

* (2120)

Mr. Martindale: Will any of this land be set aside for social housing?

Mr. Ernst: Maybe.

Mr. Martindale: Maybe is not good enough. Since you are negotiating now, you must know now whether or not you intend to set aside any land for public housing.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are not negotiating with anybody. We have invited people to submit proposals to us for the potential development of this property. That is as far as we have got so far. As I said, maybe may have been a

little facetious. At the same time, it is probably very, very accurate in terms of, no decisions have been made with respect to this property and nor do we want to preclude any development proposals that come in.

We may have somebody come in and suggest that they would simply buy the entire site from us and pay us a zillion dollars for it, and end of the story. We may have somebody come in to suggest that we should develop the entire parcel as a golf course. I do not know. There are any number of kinds of proposals that can come forward.

So until we see what they are, what the potential is for MHRC, it will not make any precipitous decisions with respect to—I should suggest too that there is no shortage of land in Winnipeg for social housing projects. Whether they are located there or located a block away on an existing parcel somewhere that we may be able to purchase, it might be a better deal for us to buy a site a block away or two blocks away for half the price of the cost of setting aside land in this particular subdivision.

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

It may be inappropriate in this subdivision. It is a long way from anything at the present time. This would be way out in the sticks, so to speak, where there are limited services available, both public transit and commercial and other services and so on. It may be totally inappropriate to provide land there. So we will look and see what comes in and then we will make some decisions accordingly as we go along.

Mr. Martindale: So I take it that the minister has no preference before the proposal calls come in; you do not have any criteria. I will put that in the form of a question. Do you have any criteria as to what you would like to see developed on that land? It seems to me it makes a very big difference whether it is developed for housing or a golf course, to use the minister's example. Have you not thought about this before the proposal call, or are you just waiting to see what comes in?

Mr. Ernst: We have asked the proponents to provide a conceptual plan for development of the property. There are limited numbers of things that can be done with that property. Obviously, you are not going to develop a chemical factory on it. It is slated within the city's long-range development plan as a residential reserve. In terms of residential, it will be low-density residential, either single-family or

limited multiple-family development, under the city's long-range development plan.

So there are limitations on what can happen on the site. I suppose the potential exists that if somebody wanted to pay us a huge dollar to build a golf course on there and we can make a substantial profit from it and turn that profit into more benefits for social housing recipients, then we might be tempted to do that. That bridge we would have to cross when we come to it.

Mr. Martindale: Even though it is zoned low-density residential by the city, you would be prepared to look at a proposal which would change it to some other use, such as a golf course, if you thought Manitoba Housing would be paid more money for that parcel of land?

Mr. Ernst: Well, first of all, it is not zoned. I said, the city's long-range development plan designates the area as low-density residential. From that perspective, that limits what you can do on it but, yes, if the government saw an opportunity to sell this property for sufficient dollars to be able to create a larger benefit for housing elsewhere in the city or under a different analysis, we would be crazy not to accept it. I mean, if somebody wants it bad enough, they are prepared to pay for it. If they are prepared to pay for it, then we should maximize the benefit to housing recipients in the city of Winnipeg through our operations. That is somewhat far-fetched I would think in this market but, nonetheless, anything is possible.

Mr. Martindale: You really do not have any criteria. You are just looking for whatever is the most profitable proposal.

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I just wanted to ask the minister the same kind of question the member for Burrows is asking, because this land is probably in the area that I represent.

I just wanted to ask a basic policy question. How do you decide that, for example, there are a lot of lots that are vacant, a lot of area which is vacant, many people do not have money to buy a house, many people are just going bankrupt—how do you set up another community? Ultimately, the taxpayers or the city are going to pay. We are all going to pay for those services. Initially, the cost, the developer would pay and that could be one of the reasons that the government may seem as very acceptable.

That has happened in the past. You do not want to start up something in which somebody else has to pay your bills. I think we have to look at those things very carefully, because we have a development in the area in terms of some of the development by Genstar which was done at Seven Oaks Square and then next to Amber Trail. Close to there, a lot of lots are empty. If you go only three blocks away from the east side of Leila Avenue, many lots are just lying there and people cannot even get their own land subdivided because the city says, well, we cannot provide services. It is very expensive.

People are stuck with their own land, but a major developer, I do not care what the name of the developer is, that is not the issue here, the issue is how that developer could, with the start up money, attract government to give some financial incentive in the first place. Then we end up paying in the long run. That is the issue which is very important for the taxpayers, then the councillors are getting a bad name because the councillor has to justify the tax raise.

I just want the minister to consider those things because those are very real issues. I think that not only in that area, but as a general statement in terms of the policy of the government, considering our population is not growing. We do not have many individuals who are lined up to buy houses. There are a lot of other vacant lots out there. There is a lot of inner city area which needs a lot of improvement. Government could do a lot of things if you want to look at how the money can be spent effectively.

I think it is foolish to get into any of these things without seeing the long-term consequences. If you are going to set up another community half to one mile outside the city limit, basically, provide all the transportation services, provide the sewer system, provide the telephone, hydro and everything else, it is very, very expensive. Initially it looks very attractive because they can build a road, and after they build a road, then that is it. Basically, then, they can set up their own prices. It is a money-making business. You and me and somebody else are going to pay the bills.

I would like to know if the government could take even a more proactive approach, as the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is saying, set up some criteria, tell us exactly which way the government,

from a provincial point of view, would agree to any kind of major development in the suburbs.

* (2130)

Mr. Ernst: Well, that was a mouthful, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, but I do not disagree with the member for The Maples. First of all, let me say that this matter was initiated, not by us in the first instance, but by the private owner of an adjacent parcel, who cannot develop their property without our co-operation.

At the same time, we did have an interested party willing to look at purchasing the privately held parcel on the condition that there was a joint venture undertaken with us. We were reluctant to enter into a joint venture without at least canvassing the market to determine what was out there, and what the potential was, and what private companies thought might occur over the next five or 10 years. It is just not an overnight wonder. This is a long-term process. We are talking here about, I think, 150 acres of land altogether, between the private and the public ownership parcels.

What we did was, we said, let us invite some proposals and see what people are prepared to do, to pay to what they view might happen in this area. Before anything occurs in the ground, there is an awful lot of process to go through yet to determine whether or not we should undertake this project at all. That includes a significant rezoning process through the City of Winnipeg and the analyses of existing development and all the things that the member raises concerns about, as well as a development agreement in terms of who pays for what when services are installed. So there are a host of things, and we are not looking at any immediate development taking place there. I would think any development would be at least a couple of years away.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the issue is very important. If you go on, the next road is Balgona Road. There are plots varying from two acres to six acres or 10 acres. Every time they go in front of the city committee, the committee is saying you cannot subdivide it, because it is a personal property, we cannot provide all the services, and at two, three blocks away—I mean if the government is going to get into something to make money, ultimately the taxpayers are going to pay. Why not give it to the individual citizens who have worked very hard and would like to get their land subdivided? They are really caught, because

the council says, we cannot do anything, and the minister is saying, there are a number of things that need to be considered.

I think those issues are very important, and I am sure this issue is going to become more explosive during the civic campaign, because those roads are not fixed. We have a person who works in this building. He has six or eight acres of land, and the road, the Balgona Road, is a big mess. Almost every second or third acre, we have houses there and they cannot even get the road fixed. They cannot even have gravel on the road.

If we are going to have two or three blocks away a so-called big development area, which we all have to pay, I think those things need to be discussed. I think it is an opportunity for the minister and this government to have some clear-cut policy in terms of who should be developing and not to sell the interest of individuals, because you are setting up a major community and everyone else is going to suffer in the long run. We have seen that. There are examples right now—I do not know about other communities, but I know in The Maples area in terms of close to the northwest of McPhillips, and those are three or four roads, and along the side of Pipeline, when you go a couple of miles away.

It is an important issue, and I would like the minister to note those comments from me, because those are things individuals have raised with me. I always thought that we could probably go to City Council and make a case but, when you go to them, they have the same argument why you cannot divide this—it is personal property. Six acres, you have to have two or three more individuals in the family to have a subdivision done, and I think it is unfair. Simply, I just want the minister to know that is an issue.

Certainly I am not totally 100 percent knowledgeable on the details of the issue but, on the surface, it looks really very suspicious that a major company, major developer would come and simply take away what is due the people who have really had their properties for the last many years. I mean, they have set their houses there for so many years. Then all of a sudden somebody else who may have a direct say to the government—who knows?—that have advantage. I think it is unfair.

Mr. Ernst: By and large those issues fall in the purview of the City of Winnipeg. They will determine the development pattern. This development, we are at such a preliminary stage

here. I mean, we simply asked for somebody's ideas about the property, and that is all.

Mr. Cheema: That is the way it starts, right?

Mr. Ernst: True, but it may be two, three, four or five years down the road that something will occur there. We do not know that. We may get no answers from our proposal call. We do not know at this point.

The question of your individual constituents who have problems that need to be addressed, they need to be addressed by the City of Winnipeg. They are the planning authority for the City of Winnipeg, and they are the ones who have to make those decisions as to where they want development to take place.

I know what the situation is. The people do not want to front-end the service costs to deal with it. They want the city to pay the front-end service costs, and they want to reap the windfall benefits of selling their property. Well, I do not blame them; I would like to do that too, but too bad. If somebody is prepared to put up their money in order to achieve those benefits, then the city is quite rightly not—why should the taxpayer put up the money so these people can reap the windfall when there is another taxpayer somewhere else who is prepared to put up his own money in order to reap a windfall?

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I just want to spend a few minutes on the same issue in terms of—

Mr. Ernst: Quite frankly, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I do not want to cut off the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), and I understand his situation, and maybe I got a little too carried away in provoking him, but the fact of the matter is, it has nothing to do with the Housing Estimates. We have had a discussion because it related to this proposal, but it really has nothing to do with Housing.

I would be happy to discuss it with the member for The Maples on another occasion. Unfortunately, it cannot be Urban Affairs Estimates, because we did those this afternoon already but, on another occasion, I would be happy to talk to him about it.

Mr. Cheema: I do understand that may not be the 100 percent proper place, but it still is a concern, whether the minister likes it or not, whether I like it or not. That is the issue there, an issue that is a very real one. It is going to come and, ultimately, the minister's desk will see some of those things, because those concerns are real.

It may not be the right place, but probably we can ask the minister in the concurrence motion, but I am really concerned with that issue in terms of what is happening out there, why individuals are going to suffer on behalf of somebody who is bigger and larger and who has more money than the individual citizen. I think it is unfair.

Mr. Ernst: I do not disagree. Would the members of the committee entertain a few moments of recreation and reconvene at quarter to?

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): What is the committee's will? Recess for eight minutes? Quarter to? Recess. Thank you.

* * *

The committee took recess at 9:38 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 9:46 p.m.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): I will call the committee to order. We are currently on 1.(c) Finance and Operations: (1) Salaries \$2,041,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$467,400—pass.

Item 2.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$133,700.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I was just looking at the Expected Results here. It says to "Ensure effective direction is provided to the division in planning and management of departmental programs." I am simply asking again the same question: Why do we have too many managerial and support staff and everything else, to spend a very small amount of money in terms of in the whole department? Am I missing the basic point here?

Mr. Ernst: Yes, I think you are missing the point. There are two divisions in the Department of Housing. One deals with the question of financial management and the series of programs related to financial management including mortgages, administration and all those kinds of things on the one hand.

This program development and support is basically the section of the department that is involved with program delivery. So under this section, this is where the new housing commitments are being made and carried out, the new program is being carried under that division of the department. That is where the SAFER and SAFFR programs are

administered from, and a number of those kinds of things.

While the \$10 million overall relates to this department, there is a whole other—the question of transfer subsidies and so on to MHRC which appears as the largest single line, I think, in the departmental Estimates, at \$36 million, is where a lot of their program ultimately gets funded.

In addition to that, we have capital expenditures related to these program divisions. For instance, if we build a 35-unit project and there is a capital expenditure of \$2 or \$3 million associated with that, that comes out of the capital line, the \$2 million or \$3 million for the capital construction of the project. Subsidies come out of the transfer payments area. This is the administrative area associated with that program.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Item 2.(a)(1) Salaries \$133,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$12,800—pass.

Item 2.(b)(1) Salaries \$339,500.

Mr. Martindale: Well, now we are into some very interesting substantial issues, ones that the minister and I have talked about before.

Before we get to the elimination of the Co-op Housing Program and offloading of housing responsibility to the provinces, et cetera, I would like to ask some questions about the three-year social housing plan. I wonder if the minister could tell me what it consists of, for a start.

Mr. Ernst: To be slightly facetious, about 10 dead trees for one. It is a very large document utilizing an awful lot of paper for this ongoing thing, and we have to revise it on a regular basis and so on. It is a document about, well, I would guess, an inch thick, relating to a whole series of social housing parameters and guidelines established by CMHC.

* (2150)

Mr. Martindale: Would it be possible to receive a copy of the three-year social housing plan or any parts of it?

Mr. Ernst: This is a document between CMHC and Manitoba Housing. We are not certain if it is a protected document or not. We will investigate to determine if CMHC has an objection. If they do not, I do not see any reason why you cannot have one.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for that. If he would follow up, and if they give

permission, I would be interested in reading it. I appreciate him saying that he will ask CMHC.

Mr. Ernst: Puts you to sleep instantly.

Mr. Martindale: Since research and planning provide regular analysis of the housing market and market trends including starts, vacancy rates, absorption levels, et cetera, I wonder if the minister could comment on housing market trends.

We know that housing starts of new construction are, I think, slightly up this year over last year, but construction in the '90s is considerably lower than the '80s. Could the minister comment on the trends in housing construction?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the statistics, by and large, speak for themselves. I do not need to relay to the member for Burrows that information. I am sure he has it.

In general terms, interest rates today are probably as low as they have been in two decades as far as financing of housing is concerned, but there is a significant malaise in the economy, as well, that I think is holding a lot of people back from making a major commitment toward the purchase of new housing.

There is also a very large supply of existing housing in the marketplace which is being absorbed at a much more rapid rate than has been the case over the last couple of years, as well. Until you reach a point where the absorption of existing housing stock is at a point where it starts now to make sense to go into new housing, given the cost differentials between the two, then it is potential that new housing starts will be limited for the next period of time at least anyway.

Notwithstanding the fact that Winnipeg has experienced a population growth of about 3.6 percent over the last five years, as indicated by Stats Canada and through the last census arrangement, the fact of the matter is, household formations are down. There is a whole host of social demographic information that indicates we will not see, I do not think, the big booms of the '70s again here unless something very, very major happens to create huge population growth in Winnipeg. That population growth is simply not based on population either. It has to be based on population with an ability to purchase.

We are very fortunate here that a significant number of renters in Winnipeg have the option, can afford to buy a home, but the new housing market

in particular is reaching now in excess of \$100,000 for a new single family home on a suburban 50-foot lot, so those costs are beyond the reach of many.

You are looking really at kind of the transfer, shall we say, of an existing homeowner of a more modest home, who has it paid for or who has a substantial equity, who now can look at a move-up situation where they can move from maybe their older, more modest home into a larger or newer home because they have a significant equity and can handle the financing of that new home, but that is again much more limiting in terms of new home construction. [interjection]

Well, certainly, the economy has a great deal to do with it. If people are in a position to see some long-term security in their job and are not living with the fear that their business may close or whatever in the next little while, then they will be prepared to make a commitment to that.

I think the buoyancy of the economy will have to recover before we are going to see any significant movement in the housing market.

Mr. Martindale: I believe I have read that Winnipeg has the highest percentage of renters of any major city in Canada who can afford to buy a home. I think it is in the range of 35 percent to 40 percent which is quite significant. Does the minister or his government believe in stimulating the housing construction market, new housing construction, by programs such as grants to first-time home buyers?

We know that we need the construction jobs. We know that those dollars circulate in the community and are spent over and over again. We know that the money is probably recovered in terms of taxes paid, income taxes and real estate taxes, and my understanding is that housing construction provides one of the highest per capita job creation rates of any kind of housing stimulus. It is one of the fastest and one of the best ways to get people working again.

I think I know what the answer is, but I would be interested in hearing whether the minister believes in stimulating new housing construction or not.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, our government is very reluctant to get involved in artificial stimuli to the economy in general, particularly at the expense of existing taxpayers, because what happens—you know, there is roughly 1.3, I think, or 1.4 man years of employment created per home in the city of Winnipeg. That is not

significant. It is significant in the sense that if you build thousands of homes that there are obviously thousands of jobs created along with it. The fact of the matter is that we are not going to see. CMHC has done a number of things. They have reduced the down payment to 5 percent. The federal government has indicated people can use RRSP contributions to fund equity positions in new homes and so on.

There is no expectation on the part of the government to artificially stimulate the economy through grants to first-time homeowners and so on.

Mr. Martindale: Is the major reason for that because your government is philosophically opposed to that, or because you believe that the demand is not there for new housing?

Mr. Ernst: I suppose it is a little of a lot of things. Certainly, our government does not believe in major artificial stimuli to the economy at the cost to the taxpayer. We saw that when the NDP were in government, and the legacy of that, we are paying for today.

The fact of the matter is that those short-term jobs were created and disappeared. We are left with a debt, hundreds of millions of dollars that was borrowed to artificially stimulate the economy. The Province of Manitoba cannot afford that. The taxpayers of Manitoba, those people who are still left paying the taxes to support all of the other programs in the government: health care, education, family services, social service areas, and so on, they are at the point of tax exhaustion in Manitoba now. So we are not about to burden them with a whole pile of new debt to create some short-term jobs and to impossibly put people into housing that cannot afford to be there, but because of a particular grant or whatever, wind up in those situations. We do not agree with that.

* (2200)

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): The hour being ten o'clock, what is the will of the committee, to keep sitting? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I just want to ask the minister one thing in terms of, as the minister knows, the Department of Health is undergoing a serious, major health care reform. Under the Manitoba health care reform package, one major component is to alternate community placement services. There is going to be part of the

housing. It is going to be one of the components with the community component where housing could play an important role.

Can the minister tell me if he has had any discussion with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in terms of having the housing project for the individuals, specifically with the mentally ill patients, who are going to be discharged into the community pretty soon? Can he tell me, and if not, then why not? It is one of the major initiatives of the Minister of Health who has said that he is going to get each and every department involved.

Mr. Ernst: The answer to the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) is yes.

Yes, we are, as a matter of fact, having those discussions. Officials from my department are on committees with the members from the Department of Health. We have over the past number of years participated in deinstitutionalization projects related to housing. We have one project this year, I think, in Dauphin. The Parkland mental health situation, we have one project there. We will continue to try and assist wherever we can.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, can the minister give me a more specific answer in terms of how many units are going to be part of this new mental health reform which are going to be provided through the Department of Housing and with the Department of Health because that is a major component? It is not just having a few meetings here and there. There has to be a serious discussion and specific numbers.

Mr. Ernst: I cannot give—I am sure what the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) would like is 200—a fixed number. It is a little premature at this point to say that. We have one project in the works for this year.

We also have ongoing discussions with the Department of Health with respect to how they are going to deliver that program and whether in all cases, or some cases, or no cases, as the case may be, it will be delivered through the Department of Housing. There may be other vehicles to be delivered. We have a limited ability to carry out this delivery, so we cannot really give you a definitive answer at this point.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I do not want to take up too much time in this area. I just wanted to say that the minister is not aware of what is happening in terms of mental reform. That is not

his area. But certainly the minister should know that it is very essential that one of the components in mental health reform, when you are going to take patients out of institutions, is to provide alternative care delivery, and that the housing part is going to be very essential.

I would ask the minister: Is his department playing any specific role, or are they part of the Committee on Mental Health Reform or not?

Mr. Ernst: I did indicate to the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) that, yes, my department officials are participating with the Department of Health. I think I have said that on a couple of occasions. We are dealing.

But we may or may not provide all or part of the Department of Health's initiative. We have limited abilities to provide that under our federal-provincial program guidelines. We will provide what we can.

It may be that the Department of Health will have to find other alternatives, that we may not be able to deliver it through the Department of Housing. We have some involvement. We have in other cases no involvement. It is all interdependent upon our ability to deliver within our program allocations.

So it is not necessarily the Department of Health's view that Manitoba Housing would provide all of the resources related to it. We may only provide a small portion of it. It depends on how these programs are carried out.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am not asking the minister to be a major component as a part of your department. But I think it would be a good idea for you to discuss with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), because that seems to be the understanding, that when the alternative models of delivery will be involved in terms of Housing also, and that is being expected. I do not want any surprises to come tomorrow, that was not a part of the planning.

It is very essential in terms of whether the Selkirk institution or the Brandon mental hospital, when you are going to release some of the patients into the community, whether the funding is going to come from the Department of Health or the Department of Housing. That is not the issue here. It is whether there is some co-ordination going on, and if not, then I think it is a good idea to get involved at this stage of the game.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, let me try and explain for the member for The Maples (Mr.

Cheema) again that Manitoba Housing's involvement in the provision of housing is within our mandate, within our ability to pay—sorry, strike the "ability to pay," although it is a factor, so within our unit allocation availability. It is not our mandate to provide the housing for every other department of the government. It is not our job to provide housing for every welfare case that is represented by the Department of Family Services.

We provide what we can within our limited scope and limited resources. So if Health wants to deliver a program, they do not necessarily consult us with respect to all of the programs that they deliver that require housing. We meet with them. We have our officials discussing with them what we can provide in the overall context of their program. But their expectations may be a lot higher than ours, and that sometimes happens within the bureaucracy of government where you get expectations that cannot be realized because we do not have the capability to do that.

I am glad you raised the question, and we will certainly undertake those discussions.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, it is not the routine thing I am asking. Something which is very important has been happening in the Department of Health, and that part, the mental health part, is a major component. Out of that major component, there are various different models or deliveries the government is considering, your minister is considering.

I am not saying that there has to be specific money allocated; basically, departmental research could play a very important role in co-operation with the Department of Health. The minister said something is being done, but I think more discussion may be required.

I am not saying that the minister is not doing enough. I am simply saying that you probably have to co-operate more in terms of research and planning and make sure that some of your resources can be given to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to make sure that they get the best advice possible, rather than going out and thinking in six months time what should have been done.

Mr. Ernst: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I thank the member for his advice.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was asking a question in terms of any specific program which will

deal with grants to start up new housing in the inner city.

We had one concern that was under the core area, and that was about eight months ago, we had a concern raised with the minister. The program is called the RRAP housing program.

Can the minister give us the updated information, where we are on that program now? [interjection] Yes, it is called the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

* (2210)

Mr. Ernst: Yes, the RRAP program is delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the federal government's housing arm. They utilize the Manitoba Metis Federation in rural Manitoba for a delivery agent, and the City of Winnipeg, inside Winnipeg, for its delivery agent there. We have no direct involvement in the RRAP program.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the other issue here is, as the minister knows, our economic situation. I am not saying this government has to be totally blamed, but a number of things, I think, have to be done in terms of stimulating the economy and trying to take advantage of the low mortgage rates, and see if something can be done to try to develop a program which will provide grants for individuals to be able to buy new houses.

Under the new federal government policy, they have to put less as a down payment, but still, I think if something can be done either to upgrade the houses or buy new houses in the inner city area, that could be helpful.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Eventually, I think that will help, maybe in part, to stimulate some of the economic situation. I mean, every house has a few more jobs attached to that. I think it is an idea worth considering. Some of the provinces have done it in the past. Some were not very successful. The Premier of Saskatchewan, Grant Devine, was probably a failure in that program, very much so. I just want the minister to say whether they are considering such an idea.

Mr. Ernst: No, we are not considering it, but I thank the member for his advice and take it under consideration.

Mr. Martindale: I notice that under Expected Results, there is a goal of approximately 600 units of subsidy for 1992-93. I wonder if, first of all, the minister could give me a breakdown of the number

of units anticipated to be built in urban areas and the number in rural areas.

Mr. Ernst: Okay, it will take me a minute to sort this out, but let me run through various programs for you—to be constructed this year. It will be a mix, some of last year, some of this year. Actual construction to be done this year will have approximately under the private nonprofit and public nonprofit, 150 units. Then there are an additional 24 units for Dial-a-Life which is a special project for kidney dialysis patients. We just had the sod-turning, as a matter of fact, on Friday.

That is roughly a total of 170 units under those programs. We do not have it broken down between the city and rural at the moment, but I can sort that out. It may take a few minutes to pull it all out. For instance, under the nonprofit program, that is public and private nonprofit, in 1991, we delivered 288 units, or we committed to 288 units. Some of those are delivered, most will be delivered during 1992. Then our commitments for this year, anticipated, will be 193 units under that program.

Under rent supplement, in 1991, we committed 183. This year, we anticipate commitment of 77. Under the rural and native program, delivered or committed to, 118 units in 1991 and anticipated, 89 units in 1992. The urban native program, 1991, committed 108 units, and in 1992, anticipate committing 81 units, for a total then of 1991, 697, and for 1992, 440. Those are anticipated only at the moment because we have not yet finalized our unit allocation with CMHC, and it may be a few more weeks yet before that is ultimately finalized.

Mr. Martindale: So it is possible that there could be more units depending on what is finalized with CMHC.

Mr. Ernst: You have to understand how these units are allocated. The units are allocated in terms of lifetime costs. CMHC does not just write us a letter and say you have 400 or 500 units. It is a dollar figure and that dollar figure is calculated on lifetime costs, and that has to do with construction costs and operating costs and long-term subsidies, and so on.

It is a process of working through that number back to how many units you can commit to or not. It depends, of course—the same dollar in Winnipeg will deliver more units than that dollar in Toronto or Vancouver, but we do not have everything finalized with CMHC yet on that, but it is a rough order of magnitude of what we anticipate.

Mr. Martindale: So, in other words, that 440 may increase to 600?

Mr. Ernst: No, the 440 may increase to 444.

Mr. Martindale: Where does the 600 number come from that is in the Estimates book?

Mr. Ernst: That is what we committed to last year.

Mr. Martindale: Okay. In I think every category that the minister read out, there was a decrease in units from '91 to '92. What would the main reason be for that?

Mr. Ernst: Well, in a large part, it is a CMHC cap. We will in fact have included in our numbers the delivery of some nondesignated units that are related to that new program I referred to in my opening remarks, where there will be units delivered outside of the CMHC commitment but part of the same project so that when you have a mixed project of some designated subsidized units and some nondesignated, nonsubsidized units, then you are still delivering X number of units, you are still delivering the construction program, you are still targeting the needs of seniors, you are still doing all the things, except you are now meeting a different market segment than you are with the subsidized units. So we are still delivering those number of units, but by and large, it is the cap.

Mr. Martindale: I presume that the minister cannot give me completely detailed information because you have not announced who is getting what units yet for this year. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernst: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Martindale: At a future point, could you give me a more detailed breakdown of rural and urban Winnipeg versus other urban centres? I do not expect it tonight.

Mr. Ernst: When the program is finalized and the projects are publicly announced and all those kinds of things, sure. I do not have a problem with that.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister could give us a further breakdown in some specific categories such as special needs, second stage housing and safe shelters. Do you know if any of the unit allocations are going to go to any of those or all of those, and if so, is it possible to give numbers?

* (2220)

Mr. Ernst: To answer the member for Burrows' question, we committed last year to 40 beds for special purpose. They were all crisis shelters: one in The Pas; one in Selkirk; one in Steinbach. This

year we are looking at between two and four projects, depending upon finalized numbers and finalized projects that are related to crisis shelters again, two in Winnipeg, two in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Martindale: Any units going to second stage housing or to special needs?

Mr. Ernst: There is one special needs. One of the projects, for instance, Main Street project, is a special needs project. We have one other special needs project in the finalized stages, a small project dealing with severely handicapped individuals. No second stage housing project proposal that I am aware—we have had one that has come forward, but they have not yet finalized. We have been having ongoing discussions, but Alpha house have not finalized their operating money yet, so we would not be advancing capital funds for that project until such time as their operating funding is secured.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to move on to the elimination of the federal co-op housing program. I received a document from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada—[interjection] Well, my colleague for the Maples has a question on second-stage housing.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I just wanted to ask the minister, he said the Alpha Housing Project has not finalized their operating budget, or whatever, at this stage, but I have a letter in my hand that says that they have raised about \$30,000 from the church groups, and they are continuing to approach the community at large through various organizations. According to them, they have applied for the second-stage housing project.

Can the minister tell us what else they have to do to get funding from the Department of Housing?

Mr. Ernst: Thirty thousand dollars would last them about three months. We are not going to commit a large amount of capital and create a project for them to operate if they are not going to last any longer than a few months.

We have told them—and I have had several discussions with the proponents of that project, and I explained to them that either get a commitment from Family Services to fund it on a per diem basis or—and they seem to want to do this from a number of organizations and churches in the Winnipeg community—I said, go and get a funding commitment from, you know, if you want to get 10 parishes to commit to funding on an ongoing process, but we

need a three to five year, at least, commitment that there will be funding available to operate.

Otherwise it will be there in Question Period, saying, why are we cutting off their funding when we never provided it in the first place? So we have to realistically, from our point of view as a delivery agent now—however sympathetic we may be, the Department of Housing is not in the business of providing first or second-stage housing for abused people, children.

We are in the business of providing housing, period. In this case, the Department of Family Services becomes a client department of Housing. We have to operate on a reasonably business-like basis, and we would like to know when we provide the capital money how they are going to pay it back and how they are going to be able to fund and operate their shelter.

We have made a number of suggestions to them. As a matter of fact, she even tried to recruit me for her fundraising program, because I had a number of suggestions for her to pursue, but I say, we need to have some commitment. As my old friend, Slaw Rebchuk, used to say on City Council, we need it in black and writing, because we have to have some basis upon which to advance a project like this, not that we do not want to do it.

They have some more work to do yet before it will be in a position to be able to proceed.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a very interesting document from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada called, One of Canada's Quiet Success Stories. In fact, there are 15 newspaper articles about the success of housing co-ops. I believe all of these were written after the federal co-op program was eliminated.

A quote on the front page says: Suppose you wanted to build the kind of housing that will serve well in the 21st Century. Ideally, it would be economical to produce, immune to the wild, speculative swings of the real estate market and designed to foster a sense of community. People would be proud to live in it. That sort of accommodation already exists. It is called co-operative housing.

In another document that they faxed to me, they pointed out that in a CMHC evaluation, they were found to be much lower in terms of operating costs compared to public housing. They claim 40 percent lower in this 1990 CMHC evaluation. They were 20

percent lower than the operating costs of private, non-profit, rental housing.

This has resulted in more than \$30 million of savings to the taxpayer each year on a rent geared to income subsidy in co-op housing.

The minister and I have discussed this cutback before, both informally and in Question Period, and we both agree that the federal government action was arbitrary and harmful to the province of Manitoba. The minister indicated to me that he wrote to the federal minister. I believe I asked if he would table the letter, and the minister declined, but I would like to pursue this. I would like to assure myself that the minister took a strong stand, as strong as possible, with the federal government, because this has serious implications for Manitoba.

We have lost unit allocations, we will lose construction jobs in Manitoba, we will have fewer units of affordable housing for Manitobans, so I would like to ask the minister again if he would table his letter so that we can see for ourselves and assure ourselves that the minister did take a tough stand with the federal government.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on April 10, I believe it was, the Housing ministers of Canada met in Ottawa, following the announcement of the federal budget related to both social housing and co-op housing. At that time, we entertained the delegation from the co-op housing association of Canada, which came in a highly unusual move, as a delegation to the ministers' meeting. We do not normally receive delegations at those federal-provincial meetings, but it was determined that given the seriousness of the matter, we would entertain that delegation.

From that meeting, came concerns expressed by all Housing Ministers in the country about the loss of the co-op program as well as the cap on CMHC budget to reduce our social housing unit allocations. We, through the ministers' meeting vehicle, where we expressed our opinions—and I might say that as the senior minister responsible for Housing in Canada in terms of length of office—you know, by quirks of fate in elections and other things, I turned out to be, I think, if I remember correctly, the senior minister at the meeting and led, I think, a productive discussion of the problems facing us and what we can do about it.

Our officials have, since that time, been undertaking certain work. We hope, when we meet at the end of the month with the federal minister, we

will be able to provide some alternatives to him that can see some of this potential loss reinstated. Now, whether that will translate into additional social housing units, additional special needs units, units for the urban native community or co-op housing units, we cannot say at this point.

* (2230)

If it comes down to, are you going to provide funding—and I concur with the co-op housing association of Canada. I mean, to tell them in December it is on and then in February it is off is not the way to do business in my view, but nonetheless, if we are faced with the option, and I do not know whether we will be or not, of having increased allocations for social housing units as opposed to nondesignated co-op housing units. If we have to make that choice, then we will take the choice of the social housing units for Manitoba because, as much as I want to see housing alternatives for people and so on, if we are faced with dealing with the poorest of our society and the ability to provide affordable and adequate housing for them, then that is the option we will take.

However, much of that is still speculative at the moment. We do not know. We have not received a response from the federal government to our protestations and hopefully will receive that at the end of the month when we attend in Toronto to meet with the ministers.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the answer is interesting, but the minister did not answer my initial question about: Will he table the letter? So I take it you are refusing to table the letter that you wrote to the federal Minister of Housing or Minister of Finance?

Mr. Ernst: The member from Burrows (Mr. Martindale) can surmise all he wishes, believe what he wishes to believe, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. We have made significant protestations to the federal government with regard to the loss of both the co-op housing program and social housing program dollars.

We are very concerned and will continue to be concerned but not simply to jump up and down and protest. We took the view, with my insistence, at the ministers' meeting that we need to find an alternative, because we are all faced with that problem provincially. It does not matter what political stripe it is either, quite frankly. There are lots of NDP governments that are faced with the exact same problems. In fact, they are worse off

than we are in Manitoba, but we are all faced with those problems.

So if we are faced with those problems and you believe in the process and you believe in what you are doing, then you try and find a way around it, and the way around it is simply not to throw more money at it, to borrow more money to throw at it. The way to find it is to reallocate your resources, re-create your priorities, relook at your priorities to determine what you want to spend your money on. So we have charged our officials with the process of looking into how we can do that, where we can find from within. Where can we find economies like the MHA, where, for instance, we will anticipate savings of somewhere in the area of \$3 million between CMHC and ourselves? Well, there is the potential for reallocated money within our existing budgets.

If we can do more with those kinds of dollars, if we can save some money in the process—I mean, we ought to be doing it anyway, but quite apart from that, if we can find other economies, if we can find other means of addressing the whole issue and how we can find funding to meet the demands and needs of the people out there, then we will do it.

Nothing was ever achieved by jumping up and down and crying over something. You have got to get out and get active and do something. That is what we are doing, and that is what we are hoping to find so that we can go to the federal government and say, look, we have an alternative. Here it is. By some reallocation on your part, by some work on our part, by some co-operation between us, we think we can deliver a similar program or that we may be able to mitigate against at least the cap that you are living under. I think that is something we ought to be doing, and we are attempting to do that.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the minister says he is concerned, but we have no proof because he will not table the letter. He acknowledged that they met with a delegation from CHF, but I understand that none of the Ministers of Housing even asked them any questions, even though this is a group with a lot of specialized knowledge. They represent 70,000 units of co-op housing in Canada. The minister says that he protests this move, but we do not have any proof that he actually did.

Also, the minister talks about wanting to get more value for their money or targeting money, maybe using the money for social housing, public housing rather than co-op housing, yet tonight we heard, I believe for the first time, an announcement about a

new seniors program which will actually subsidize high-income seniors. Now, we will get into the details of that later, I may be wrong—[interjection] Well, the minister said in his opening remarks that it was for high-income seniors, so we will find out the details of that later.

Could the minister tell me if all the Ministers of Housing from the provinces were present at the meeting in Ottawa?

Mr. Ernst: No, they were not.

Mr. Martindale: Of those who were present, was there a consensus, was there agreement that the federal government should be asked to reverse their decision on cutting the co-op housing program?

Mr. Ernst: It was unanimous.

Mr. Martindale: What views were conveyed to the federal government, and were they conveyed to the Minister responsible for Housing and to the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Ernst: Yes, they were.

Mr. Martindale: What views were conveyed to the federal ministers?

Mr. Ernst: I do not have the letter in front of me, but Minister Gigantes of Ontario, who is the chair this year of the Housing Ministers of Canada, on our behalf, both transmitted by mail and went to visit personally the ministers responsible—at least the Minister of Housing, I am not sure about the Minister of Finance—to convey our concerns and to convey our proposal for working together to try to find a solution to this problem, not simply just letting it hang or simply yelling that we want more money. That letter conveyed the concerns both with respect to co-operative housing and the social housing program.

Mr. Martindale: Did the provincial Ministers of Housing convey their views about the cutbacks of transfer payments to the provinces for housing?

I did not put the question correctly. There have been cutbacks to, I guess, social housing unit allocations, and you said that you were disappointed in that. What views were conveyed to the federal government about that cutback?

Mr. Ernst: I thought that is what I have been talking about for the last ten minutes, the question of social housing unit allocations and what we could do internally amongst ourselves as deliverers of the program and managers of those units so we could create economies that would free up dollars with

CMHC's current budget that we could reallocate toward social housing and other kinds of units. That is what I was talking about.

* (2240)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to move on now to the federal proposals for constitutional change affecting Housing. You have expressed in the House your concern that this will adversely affect Manitoba. I wonder if you could put on the record more specifically what those concerns are and how you anticipate Manitoba will be affected if we have constitutional changes regarding Housing, and I believe Housing is still in the package of devolution of powers.

Mr. Ernst: It will, in a large part, depend on what devolution of the powers respecting Housing are as to how Manitoba will be impacted. I have had some brief discussions with my colleague, the Minister of Housing, and of course we will agree to nothing in Manitoba until our entire process is complete. So from that point of view we will have public hearings, we will have debate in the Legislature on any constitutional change. While there has been discussion with respect to devolution of powers, if it is simply the devolution of the delivery mechanism and that CMHC will remain intact, and that federal funding through these things will remain intact and it is simply the question of delivery mechanism then, you know, I do not have a major problem. I do not think there will be a major impact on Manitoba.

If, however, it means much more than that, if it means for instance the disbanding of the CMHC, if it means national policy making in respect to a number of areas of which CMHC is actively involved, and quite frankly where a good portion of our entire real estate industry in the country is predicated, that is quite another matter. So I think quite frankly for all of the rhetoric that has been associated with the devolution of powers at the moment, I think, it is awfully up in the air as to what it actually means and so far have been unable to determine exactly if any work has been done to flesh that out. So I am hopeful that when my colleague returns from Ottawa this week that we will have at least some additional information, but at the moment I do not have any expanded thoughts for the member.

Mr. Martindale: In a letter from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada dated May 11, which I believe the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) has as well, they say that given the reduction in

federal funds for housing since 1985, it seems more and more likely that if full responsibility is to be transferred to the provinces it will not be accompanied by any financial resources. Does the minister agree with this analysis and are you urging your Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) and your Premier (Mr. Filmon) to take a strong stand in favour of strong federal powers including financial resources in the area of Housing?

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

Mr. Ernst: It has not exactly been a bed of roses with the federal government having all the powers that they presently have. You know, we have looked at something like over a five-year period a 60 or 70 percent cut overall in terms of lost units. I mean that is not something to be terribly proud of or to try and cling to. At the same time, as I indicated, until we can clarify what all of these things mean in terms of actual devolution of powers—yes, I do not disagree that there has been a significant cut in financial contributions made by CMHC. They are right.

At the same time if it is—and a lot of this as I understand it relates to the question of Québec wants to have more autonomy over what happens in Québec. So if we are talking here about in terms of devolution of powers on an as-desired basis and relates only to the delivery mechanisms that are in place and authority for delivering those things and not requiring CMHC approval to deliver them, then that is not a major problem I do not think for anybody. If Québec wants to do that then, fine, let them do it; but if it involves a lot more than that, then that is quite another matter. So I look forward to some additional information with regard to the question of what devolution of powers means.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I have also the same communication as the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), and I am sure the minister has received the same communication from the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada.

Basically, these are both issues that the member for Burrows has raised; the first one, the federal cuts, and second, in line with their own proposals in terms of giving power to the provincial governments.

I think everyone in this committee knows and everyone outside this committee knows that the Mulroney government is doing whatever they want to do. Basically, it does not matter what the minister says here or says in front of the committee.

Basically, that government has given up on many provinces for their own political agenda.

I think the best thing is that the next time, people should tell them exactly how they feel. I mean, we can make all the noise here, but they are the ones who make the decisions. So I think it is so crucial just to see how the negotiations on the Constitution are going to eventually proceed and how the decisions are going to be made.

All those things will be debated in this House, as the minister has said. We will all have an opportunity to let our views be known, but I certainly have no illusions or delusions about Mr. Mulroney's performance and his ignorance of our province.

I think it is a shame that we have two cabinet ministers from this province who have been very silent on the issues affecting our province. I will certainly see how this government will campaign with Mr. Mulroney next time. I think that is the issue for us to see, whether the Tory government of Manitoba will campaign with Mulroney and how they will defend their record.

I think that is the issue ultimately. I think it is the issue in terms of how you can criticize the government and at the same time, be in line with them and campaign with them when they are cutting everything for the provinces.

I just wanted to put those remarks on the record and express our distress and see how this government and this party will campaign in the next federal campaign, and see how they will defend the rights of the people of Manitoba, rather than defending the rights of their own parent party.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. Item 2.(b)(1) Salaries \$339,500—pass.

2.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$51,900—pass.

2.(c)(1) Salaries \$259,300—pass; 2.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$230,800—pass.

2.(d)(1) Salaries \$707,100. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, under this page, we are going to talk about the Manitoba Housing Authority. I wonder if the minister can give us an update on the number of staff.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Point of Order

Mr. Ernst: This is not Property Management, it is Project Management. Property Management falls

under the Transfer Payments to MHRC, the last line, so that is where we should be addressing the question of MHA.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister did not have a point of order, but thank you for the clarification.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, would it be appropriate on this page to discuss the 23,000 units of public housing stock in Manitoba?

Mr. Ernst: We should be dealing with it under item 3. That is the appropriate place.

Mr. Martindale: Then let us talk about the 300 housing units delivered on an annual basis involving the public and private nonprofit components.

Mr. Ernst: We have been talking about that for half an hour.

* (2250)

Mr. Martindale: Okay. Could the minister tell us about the proposal called for in 1992. Is there a proposal call and if so, is there a deadline for it?

Mr. Ernst: There is no proposal call as of yet for 1992; none is anticipated.

Mr. Martindale: If no proposal call is anticipated, does that mean that you will be allocating units to organizations that applied last year or up until the present?

Mr. Ernst: We have enough carry-over left from our previous proposal call that we will be able to allocate virtually all of the units that we have available at our disposal. Now, as we work through those proposals, some will fall by the wayside as they normally do. Not all projects contemplated ever actually proceed to completion. If there are some units left unallocated from our 1992 allocation, we may consider a proposal call in the fall for the balance of the units that are left for '92 and possibly for '93.

Again that matter is still up in the air because of our significantly reduced numbers of units, if the ultimate goal of CMHC and the federal government is realized. So you know to give you what is a fact today is that there has been no proposal call for 1992. We do not anticipate one yet. We may, depending upon availability of units, have one later this year for the balance of '92 and for '93, but that decision is not yet taken.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Minister, one of the problems that I see out in the community is that there is an inordinate time period that passes between the time that a group begins and the time that their project is approved, they get the unit allocation, they start construction and open the doors. I believe CMHC is saying now that on average it takes about five years, which seems to me to be very discouraging for any group that is looking at sponsoring a project. I wonder if you can tell me what has happened to groups that applied in the past. I believe a couple of years ago there were something like 106 proposals in response to a proposal call of which about six received unit allocations. What happened to the other approximately a hundred? Were they encouraged to reapply? Did most of them reapply? Were some of them left in limbo? What did the department tell these other applicants to do and what did they do?

Mr. Ernst: Out of the 1990 proposal call, to date about 20 or so projects have been approved. So that is about a fifth, and that is not bad in terms of numbers of units. We are still living off that list as a matter of fact, and we have in fact contained in our 1992 still some additional projects from that proposal call. They were all advised at the time that they were not successful, encouraged to keep working and so on. Some have fallen by the wayside. Some are still around waiting, and so you know it is a mixed bag in terms of what happened to all of those applications. One, of some note, for instance, the Flin Flon Seniors RentalStart project has in fact terminated voluntarily. In fact, we were prepared to fund, under our new program, that project and they determined that they were not able to proceed. I do not know if we have actually ever formally heard from them. I did read that in the Flin Flon paper. I am told we do have formal indication.

In terms of delivery time, it depends I guess a lot on how far advanced the proposal is. In some cases it is simply an idea: Gee, would it not be nice to build a seniors housing project; let us get some money from the government and do it. That is all there is. There is an interest by a group of people who want to do something, and that is as much as was there when it came to us.

Generally speaking, from the time that a formal application is made to the project on the ground, and providing it is worked at reasonably well and there are no major glitches in terms of the program, about three years, which is not a bad time horizon for major

construction projects at all, if CMHC's average is more than that, then certainly ours is not. So anyway that is where we are at with those things.

We think we can deliver a lot quicker than CMHC can in terms of an average. I think our record indicates that where people are prepared to work at it, where there is a reasonable, kind of, enough work done in the preliminary stages to flush out a project, but we provide PDF funding to people to get on with their projects and provide some of the initial stage planning. These things are invariably driven by committees as opposed to—no, committees of well-meaning private citizens—well, boards or committees, but anyway groups of people where they have to meet, they have to get together, they have to get everybody together. It is a laborious process, to say the least, and so it generally takes a little longer to finalize.

Mr. Martindale: One final short clarification, the minister indicated that groups working with Manitoba Housing take, on the average, three years. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernst: The indication is that from the time a formal application is made until the project is on the ground, it takes about three years. Now, that is assuming that—and a lot of things are in place, that there are appropriate working groups, that there is a TRG, that there is a number of efforts that have to take place to reach that kind of a horizon.

The staff have pointed out that if they hit the tide right, where they have everything administratively ready in terms of their application, that the unit allocations are available and those kinds of things, that it could be as little as a year or a year and a half. But we are giving the outside saying that over that time frame it is three years anticipated, start to finish.

* (2300)

Mr. Martindale: One supplementary question. Would the minister not agree then with the information that I indicated, albeit secondhand, from CMHC of five years? Is that because groups are working with the province and the province is speedier?

Mr. Ernst: The only major program that CMHC delivers here in Manitoba is the co-op housing program—was. The unit allocations have been so small that it might take five years to get an allocation enough to build a project.

In terms of our situation, it is very difficult to talk, even in terms of averages, because every project is

different. Every group is different. These things are all kind of done on an individual one-of-a-kind basis because they are all different projects every time. So it is difficult to say, but our guess is certainly not longer than three.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a question on procedure. I have questions on vacancies and bachelor suites, major improvements to the existing public housing stock, arrears, waiting lists, et cetera, and is the proper place to ask those under 3. Transfer Payments to MHRC?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(d) Project Management: (1) Salaries \$707,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$82,000—pass.

Item 2.(e) Client Services: (1) Salaries \$1,078,700.

Mr. Martindale: I have some questions on SAFER and SAFFR. Your department is still administering these programs. I wonder if the minister has any information on take-up rates and whether or not more people are availing themselves of these programs or less people. It seems to me that when people become unemployed that there is more low-income people in Manitoba and one would assume that, therefore, more people would be eligible. So I am interested in knowing if the caseload in these programs is going up or staying the same or going down.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am looking to see if we have some detailed information. It is in general terms. There is an interesting phenomenon that takes place in recessionary economies, that housing becomes more affordable for people, not less affordable. What you have is rents either do not go up, or go down because of recessionary times, vacancy rates that are large and those kinds of things, more increased competition for units and so on. So in a hot economy, where there is big demand, rents go up and that leaves people on limited incomes in a difficult situation.

Generally speaking, our numbers have not been increasing dramatically at all. They are relatively static, I think if I remember correctly, for those income supplement programs. I think, by and large, what you have is these things deal with either seniors on fixed incomes who are of the ability to afford accommodation or families that are the working poor who are looking for supplement,

because people on welfare are not eligible for these programs. I think in many cases presently you have a situation where they can either afford to pay their rent or they cannot. They cannot afford to pay 80 percent of it or 60 percent—I either have a job or I do not. If I do not have a job, I cannot afford to pay any rent. So I guess it by-passes these programs and heads directly to Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: So this would explain, for example, in the Adjusted Vote, 1991, for SAFER, Shelter Allowance for Elderly Renters, a decline from the Adjusted Vote of '91-'92 to the year ending '93, going down from \$4,861,400 to \$4,841,800?

Mr. Ernst: Well, it is the actual take-up.

Mr. Martindale: Does your department know what the take-up rate would be? Would 50 percent of seniors eligible for this program be in the program, 75 percent? Do you have any idea what your take-up rate is of those who are eligible according to income?

Mr. Ernst: The consensus seems to be that there is not much reliable information available to indicate as a percentage of what the actual represents over the potential. All I can say is this, that this program has been around for 12 or more years. There is not an agency in town that does not know about it. Senior support groups and family support groups as well, all over the place, are aware of the program and what it can do.

But our demand has consistently been substantially below that anticipated by some people, which renders their numbers suspect along the way. At this point, your guess is as good as ours, I guess, as to what the potential number out there could be.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the reason I asked those questions is that I have on several occasions found tenants in my constituency who are unaware of this program. I am wondering if the minister has ever considered the kind of advertising for this program that exists for the annual rent increase.

I think the advertising for rent increases is so extensive that virtually everyone is aware of whether it is 3 percent or 4 percent, or whatever it is, every year, because of widespread advertising. Has the minister ever considered advertising SAFER so that as close to 100 percent as possible of people who are eligible will take advantage of this program?

Mr. Ernst: We provide information to a host of organizations, brochures for landlords and homes,

and a variety of dissemination of information vehicles.

No, I have not considered running a TV program like the 3 percent rent guideline because anytime anything is mentioned about this, the department is deluged with calls most of which, you know, 99 percent of which are irrelevant to the issue. It really does not serve the correct purpose. You have to deal with an individual's circumstances. There are a number of calculations that are required. Some detailed information related to those things are disseminated, I think, as widely as we can, short of mass mailings, which I do not think we are going to undertake.

* (2310)

If somebody is not aware of the program and that is quite possible that somebody has been missed it is somewhere along the line or they have not had an opportunity or did not avail themselves of an opportunity to investigate, that is going to happen I suppose. If those are brought to our attention, we are certainly prepared to work with them to review the case and see if they are eligible.

Mr. Martindale: Since the main criterion for eligibility is income and rent being paid, would the minister consider advertising it through the Manitoba income tax returns?—since you can program a computer and you can print very easily on someone's income tax return. You would be targeting it to people who are eligible by age and by income. You could put an extra line on the printout saying your income indicated you might be eligible for SAFER depending on how much rent you pay—phone such-and-such a number. Would the minister consider doing that?

Mr. Ernst: I was trying to think of what the implications would be. It is something we could look at. I could not commit to it.

Mr. Martindale: Would the minister or his staff be willing to talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and find out if it is feasible or not?

Mr. Ernst: I am also advised by staff that any changes all have to be approved by the federal government as well, because the income tax system and what the dangers are and so on, I think it is something we would want to have a long and hard look at. I do not think it is just the Minister of Finance's say. It is a question of looking at the implications of it, the logistics of it, what is involved, what are the costs, what are benefits. Are you really

solving the problem? It might be a nice idea, but does it really do anything? All of those questions and then, of course, if the answers to all of those are yes, then who has to approve it and so on. It is not something that is going to happen overnight.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am going to pursue this, because I am asking this on behalf of incredibly poor people who live in the Burrows constituency. I remember meeting people on McDermot Street in very rundown accommodation who are unaware of this program. So I would like to ask the minister, would he at least commit to discussing it with his colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), because it seems it would have to at least start there? If there was some willingness in his cabinet, then the next step would be to go to the federal government. So will the minister commit, at the very least, to discussing it with the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Ernst: The first step before talking to the Minister of Finance, as I indicated to the member for Burrows a moment ago and perhaps he was not listening or did not understand, is to determine, is there a benefit from doing this, or are we simply wasting resources? Are we going to hit the target people? All of those kinds of questions have to be addressed before we get to the question of even discussing the matter with the Minister of Finance. We have to be sure we want to do it before we discuss matters outside of the department so, as I indicated, we will have a look at it.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think that is an absolutely ridiculous answer. We get all kinds of printed messages on all kinds of things, United Way, heart disease, all sorts of things in the telephone bills, utility bills. There is absolutely no reason why this could not be added. Well, I should not say there is no reason. I am asking the minister to investigate if there is any reason why this could not be done on the provincial income tax form, since all this data is computerized. You know what people's income is; you may even know what their age is, because their birth date is on the income tax form. So you have two out of the three criteria: You have their age and you have their income. So if they are low income, why could you not print on the form, you may be eligible for the SAFER program depending on your rent?

I cannot see why the minister would not at least talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and investigate it, and I will ask him again, would you be willing to do that?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, either the member for Burrows is deaf or stupid. But let me say this, that—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the Deputy Chairperson if those terms, since they are quite derogatory, are parliamentary.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: "Deaf" is parliamentary, but the other word is unparliamentary. I would ask the minister to withdraw the second part of his statement.

Mr. Ernst: I will withdraw the statement.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would also advise honourable members, as we get into the later hours of the evening, sometimes the heated debate gets the better of us, and I would ask that we please try and keep the decorum at the same level we have had to this point.

* * *

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have said twice already, for the member for Burrows' (Mr. Martindale) edification, and I am prepared to again say for the third time, that we are prepared to look at it, and to suggest for a moment that our department's wishing to look at his suggestion is ridiculous offends me. [interjection] Yes, you did.

Mr. Martindale: We will see the Hansard in a few days.

Mr. Ernst: The answer was that the department would look into the question to see if there is a benefit and what the cost of that benefit would be? Is it worthwhile to undertake, so we reach the proposed targeted individuals and so on? We will look at that information, and that was deemed by the member to be ridiculous, and that offends me, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, which caused my latter outburst for which I apologize.

Nonetheless, for the fourth time now, let me suggest to the member for Burrows, we are prepared to look into it.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I appreciate the minister's apology, but the original question was whether or not he would talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), and the minister refused.

Point of Order

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) dearly loves to sit there and make his cute little word games of trying to put words in my mouth. I did not refuse to talk to the Minister of Finance. I said I would investigate the situation internally in the department and if it was feasible, then I would talk to the Minister of Finance. So I did not refuse, and he should not try and put words in my mouth or information on the record that suggests certain comments by myself.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: I think I would like to move on to another aspect of the same issue. Several seniors have been talking to me and I hope to the minister as well about the problems with SAFER because when they have an increase in income, for example, from old age security and guaranteed income supplement or any increase, it seems that their benefit from SAFER goes down.

I do have an analysis of the Shelter Allowance Program. I am sorry, I do not have the source, and actually it looks like something that your department might have written. Perhaps Bill Mudge or somebody got a hold of it. I am not sure where I obtained it. You might recognize the name Bill Mudge though. I think he has been lobbying on the SAFER issue for quite a few years.

In the first paragraph it claims that there is ongoing backsliding of the benefits provided under the program. I am wondering if the minister and his staff agree with that as to whether there is backsliding in the program because seniors who have talked to me indicate that when their income goes up slightly, their benefits go down, and they feel like they are falling behind.

Maybe that is the way the program is supposed to work, and if so, I think it would be good if the minister could put that on the record. I could then pass that on to the seniors who have been lobbying me and possibly the minister as well.

*(2320)

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is a function of rent and income, and formulas applicable for those seniors. But it stands to reason if their income goes up, their ability to pay is increased, and

therefore, they may have to contribute more. However, we also increase the rent guideline by 3 percent, whether it goes up or not, as a potential adjustment.

Generally, the income calculations try and reflect inflation as time goes along and so on, so that in most cases—well, since we have been in government at least anyway—most, if not all, members of the public generally get a little increase in their SAFER components. There may be some who do not or some who, for other reasons, are not getting the desired result.

Before we took office, there were some years when, in fact, no increases were provided, by the former government. Some of these concerns may stem back to that time. But I can tell you in the year and a bit that I have been the minister, I have not received any complaints with regard to SAFER program, at all.

Mr. Martindale: I appreciate that clarification. I would just like to read from this document again to see if what it says is the case.

It says: To ensure a constant portion of income paid for rent is maintained between 28 percent and 30 percent, it is recommended that the Board of Directors of MHRC be encouraged to continue to adjust the maximum rent figures and the income levels annually. In conjunction with this annual review, the rent control board increase and the Consumer Price Index should be used as the basis for establishing the annual adjustments.

Is that still the case, that there is an attempt to keep it between 28 and 30 percent of income paid for rent?

Mr. Ernst: The answer is yes.

Mr. Martindale: Okay, I appreciate that. Actually I would like to share this document with you to find out if it is something that Manitoba Housing published. I do not know where I got it. But if the figures are accurate, I would be interested in knowing the source.

Mr. Ernst: It is highly unlikely my department would ever produce something that referred to "backsliding." If they did, I would certainly want to know about it.

Mr. Martindale: Well, that is why I raised it, because that is the kind of language that seniors have been using in discussions with me, and I do not really understand it. They seem to understand it quite clearly. They have all these figures, and they

try to explain it to me, but I have yet to understand it or be convinced. So I will have to send Hansard out to these individuals and see what they say.

I am ready to pass 2.(e). My colleague for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) is going to be back shortly, I hope, and he has some more questions on SAFER which I guess we could ask under 2.(f). Is that correct, Mr. Deputy Chairperson? We sort of skipped ahead anyway.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, either we are prepared to pass it or we are not.

Mr. Martindale: Let us pass 2.(e) and ask further questions on SAFER under 2.(f). Is that acceptable?

Mr. Ernst: Fine.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(e) Client Services: (1) Salaries \$1,078,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$938,000—pass.

2.(f) Grants and Subsidies \$6,829,800.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on this page I see: "Elderly and Infirm Persons Housing: Approximately 3,000 Elderly and Infirm Persons Housing units will benefit from annual grants based on capital costs."

There is a building in my constituency, St. Josephat Selo, run by the—well, I guess it is a nonprofit board. I think it was originally sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. I have had tenants in that building complain to me that in the summer during thunderstorms the windows leak water, some units on the west side of the building. It looks like a fairly new building because it has been very well maintained. It seems to be good construction except for these windows.

I am wondering if any action has been taken to provide for replacement windows. Has there been a request by the manager? When did that request happen, and will they be getting some capital cost money to replace windows or repair windows?

Mr. Ernst: This is St. Josephat's?

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I think it is 114 McGregor, McGregor and Stella.

Mr. Ernst: The indication is that we are not aware of, at this point, any problem with the windows. There were some other concerns which we have addressed in recent time, but we are not aware of any windows. Now that is not to say that somebody did not talk to somebody somewhere along the line,

but we will investigate further. Offhand we are not aware.

Mr. Martindale: Just one more brief question on the same topic. I have talked to staff in the former local housing authorities, and I do not want to name the community because they did not really want to talk to me in the first place. So, rather than using a specific example from a former local housing authority, I would like to ask a general question, and that is, how are capital improvement monies approved?

The particular complaint was that they had asked for capital repair funds to repair a house in a small community, and the general manager claimed that it took months and months and repeated calls to Broadway Avenue in Winnipeg, and nothing was happening. So what is the normal procedure for approving capital repairs in public housing units?

Mr. Ernst: With respect to the former system, it is kind of academic. We received the want list from—you know, some of those housing authorities wanted everything painted every year. They wanted all kinds of demands that were excessive and beyond anybody's reasonable ability to accommodate.

So what would happen is the department did an analysis of those requests, and prioritized them within the funds available, and those were done. Under the new Manitoba Housing Authority, we will have, in fact, maintenance supervisor personnel in every district office; hopefully, we will have a much better handle on the fact that we will not see money spent needlessly, but will deal directly with urgent repairs and matters that need to be addressed on a proper basis.

At the same time, we hope to institute ongoing maintenance programs that will see certain preventative maintenance activities take place which, in the past, very often were not. They were simply left to deteriorate until such a point that a major repair was required instead of a preventative maintenance situation. So there are a number of those kind of things will be addressed.

* (2330)

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to ask a few questions of the SAFER program. I just want to add a few comments to what the member from Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has asked, one very positive suggestion, and I do not want the minister to get upset over anything. Simply, I think it is a

positive suggestion, and we should have a look at this; secondly, whether it can be done through 55 Plus program.

We know that those people receive payments from the government, and whether simply a reminder can be sent. That is not going to cost anything extra. Many types of information are being mailed for specific purposes of the government or for some other purpose. I think it can be done, but that is up to the minister to decide.

Can the minister tell us how much money the department spent last year on the SAFER program?

Mr. Ernst: That information is in the Supplementary Estimates book there, 4 point—is it not?

Mr. Cheema: That is the amount that was supposed to be spent. I am asking whether that was actually spent? Was there any saving from that allocated funding?

Mr. Ernst: The actual is \$4,293,600.

Mr. Cheema: Given the economic circumstances and many things that the seniors are facing, how can the minister feel confident that every person, every citizen in that category has the information which they can apply for this program? I think it is premature to set up a target without knowing the full implication and without giving the benefit of doubt to the people who are really going to benefit from this program. That is why I think it is very essential for them to develop an understanding that such programs do exist.

Mr. Ernst: For the sixth time, I will indicate again for the benefit of the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), I said I will look into it. I will look into it. I just do not want to have you and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) accuse me of politicizing it if we decide to do it. Then all of a sudden we will now be using these to try and collect votes.

An Honourable Member: That would be terrible.

Mr. Ernst: Well, it would not be the first time such an accusation has occurred.

Mr. Cheema: I want to assure the minister that this time of the hour and this time of the day, in front of many individuals who are not particularly affiliated, if you do something good, we will applaud that, and we will take partial credit for that because that is the way things operate in this building.

But can the minister tell us now, in terms of the other program, how the—first is Shelter Allowance

for Family Renters. Is that the actual monies being spent in that program or has there been some saving?

Mr. Ernst: Actual expenditures under SAFFR are \$1,561,700.

Mr. Cheema: So this year the government has allocated more than \$1.7 million and last year this expenditure was—the minister has outlined already. Now, where is that money? I mean how come when so many individuals are asking, that they are not able to get access to the program? How come you are saving money from a very important program?

Mr. Ernst: SAFFR expenditures went up. SAFER, seniors, went down, which I think indicates that seniors are relatively well housed in Manitoba. There are bound to be some exceptions, but we have thousands of public housing units. We have many that are vacant seniors units in Manitoba. We have significant other seniors benefits and so on that allows them to live in affordable housing or their housing is made more affordable by those benefits that are quite apart from those housing units provided by the government.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think it is a very interesting statement the minister has made. I am not totally, as I said from the beginning, in tune with the whole housing department, but it is a major statement in terms that the seniors are in a good economic state than the other parts of the community, and that seems very, very strange. There are a lot of individuals that, the member for Burrows has said, have indicated that they are having a tough time making ends meet and I am surprised that the government is saving money in that area.

There must be something which we are missing or the seniors are missing. I will be very interested to follow up on that question. I may have to do some more research, but I would give the minister another opportunity to, probably he might like to, correct the record. Maybe he just said it without having the proper information in front of him because I am sure, like myself, the member for Burrows and other people will be very interested to see whether that is really a factual statement.

Mr. Ernst: Well, it is interesting. We have 309 vacant bachelor units in the city of Winnipeg. Last year the Winnipeg Regional Housing Authority conducted extensive advertising, open houses, on-air advertising, newspapers, senior citizens'

journals and magazines, information supplied to a number of seniors' organizations. No results. So where are these people? We have 309 vacant units, we still have 300-and-some-odd vacant units and those units are very good quality comfortable housing.

Now, they are bachelor units. They are not one bedroom or two bedroom and the discerning interests of the low-income tenant has deemed that these units are not acceptable, but if you want good, affordable, clean housing we can provide it. We have 300 vacant units and we would love to rent them but unfortunately the discerning renter again has determined that if you pay 25 percent of income, why pay it for a bachelor suite when you can get a one bedroom? Well, that is fine, but if people are in dire circumstances or concerns that they need affordable housing, we have it.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(f) Grants and Subsidies \$6,829,800—pass.

Resolution 84: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,663,600 for Housing, Program Development and Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

3. Transfer Payments to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation \$36,082,700.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I want to ask a few questions about the housing authorities and the minister is aware of our position on this. We have talked many times about our disagreement on what had happened within the department and the abandonment of local housing authorities.

I want to ask the minister a few questions on particularly the Swan River area and the Roblin area and the fact that one proposal was put forward earlier on, in February of 1991 I believe, that would have seen the housing office in Dauphin and have two people in Swan River. That plan was changed and the map was redrawn, having an office in Dauphin and in Roblin. Why was that decision made to have the office go to Roblin and no staff in Swan River, when in reality there is a much larger number of housing units in Swan River?

* (2340)

Mr. Ernst: If you also look at that same map, you will note that the whole southern part of the province was also redrawn, all the boundaries were redrawn, and that principally came about as a result of the transfer of rural and northern administration of

housing units to CMHC and urban native housing units transferred to CMHC. CMHC as of April 1, 1992, is handling the administration, property management and delivery of those programs that are no longer delivered by Manitoba Housing. As a result of that, that impacted on the numbers and the administrative duties and on the operations of the Housing Authority offices or property management offices under Manitoba Housing Authority.

So the boundaries were rejiggered around the province to reflect those issues, and you will notice that the whole east side of the province is now taken into Selkirk with the exception of a little bit down in the south by the U.S. border which is now taken into Altona which was not previously an office. Then we took in the Interlake now as a new office under Gimli because of the increased load on Selkirk. So there were a number of changes made. That is certainly not the only one, but it was as a result of that program change.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the minister saying then that the number of houses that were being run by the Housing Authority in the Swan River area decreased and there was no need for staff there? I just do not quite understand what has happened here.

Mr. Ernst: The number of offices, the district boundaries and the delivery mechanisms were changed as a result of that housing program change. That required, for instance, that areas that were formerly in the Brandon catchment area, if you will, now were extended to include into the Roblin catchment area. Roblin then became the middle of that district, because Brandon's area extended further south than east. So there were a number of boundary changes that necessitated that you relook at numbers of offices and so on as to where they were located to try and best serve the districts in which they were located.

Ms. Wowchuk: Was there any consideration given to looking at Swan River as an office? What was the reason that Roblin was chosen versus Swan River when Swan River has a much larger number of units? Was any consideration given to setting the main office in Swan River rather than Roblin?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before the minister answers, could I ask the honourable member to bring the mike up? Hansard is having some problems picking up.

Mr. Ernst: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I have indicated to the member on a number of occasions, Swan River is located at the extreme north end of that Parkland west district. To locate the office at that point would mean people would have to travel all the way south to as far south I think as Birtle, if I am not mistaken. Roblin is located in the middle of the district, and it seemed to make sense to put it in the middle of the district.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell us how many units there are in that district? Are those numbers available?

Mr. Ernst: I am advised approximately 500 in the Parkland west district and 500 in the Parkland east district roughly.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the minister will bear with me—I guess what I am trying to find out is how many of those units would be in Swan River in the northern part. Is it half of them or what percentage?

Mr. Ernst: About 169, I believe.

Ms. Wowchuk: In Swan River, plus the ones that are in Benito and Thompson that are not included in that figure. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernst: There are another 30 or so there.

Ms. Wowchuk: So roughly 200, more than a third would be located in the northern part of the area.

I guess I have to tell the minister that the people in Swan River are very disappointed in what has happened and with the number of units that are in the area, and I know the minister has received this from people in the area as well, that considering all the other impacts that Swan River has felt from moves made by this government, to then lose jobs because of the housing authority was a bad blow to the community, and it is unfortunate that this should happen, and it very much looks like a political move, to move the office into a Conservative riding.

I would hope that this is not right, but that is the impression that is being given to people, and—[interjection] No, I am not fostering it, I can assure you. That has been going on its own quite well without my fostering it.

I want to ask the minister, however, as far as the office in Roblin goes, where is the office now, in what building? There is no provincial building, as I understand, in Roblin. Out of which building is it operating? Is a new building being built in Roblin?

Mr. Ernst: There is a temporary location in an existing retail outlet in Roblin. Government

Services is investigating a variety of possibilities for permanent office space which we anticipate having in place over the next period of time. Whether that will be a new building, whether it will be an existing building, whether it will be in combination with some other activities, we are not sure at the present time. Government Services is looking into that.

Ms. Wowchuk: Last week, we raised the issue of the staff at that office. I want to ask the minister, have the interviews been held for permanent staff because that is just being filled temporarily from Dauphin, as I understand it. Has anything happened with permanent staff in that office?

Mr. Ernst: We had a large number of applications for the positions that were advertised in the newspaper. The competition closed, and we have a huge number of applications. Staff are going through those at the present time. We anticipate holding interviews over the next two or three weeks and from that, filling the positions.

Ms. Wowchuk: The other issue that was raised was the phone services. The minister had indicated the possibility of a toll-free line into some of the offices, and then we had spoken about collect calls. Are collect calls being accepted now at all the regional offices, and I think in particular of the office in Dauphin that has a switchboard. Are there any problems with collect calls going through there, or is that working smoothly? What are the plans for toll-free lines into those offices?

Mr. Ernst: As I indicated to the member privately last week, there is one toll-free line for the whole province for service to—it is direct to Winnipeg, and then it is redistributed to whatever is necessary to meet the concerns. They can also call collect to the district office. There is no problem that I am aware of that it is not working smoothly. Mind you, heaven only knows. All you need is one person to be told they cannot call collect and there is hell to pay.

All the tenants have been advised at least twice with a letter that they could call collect. The staff are aware. If it goes through a provincial government office building switchboard, who knows whether some switchboard operator will turn somebody down, but it should not happen. Beyond that, we will attempt to resolve any issues that come up.

* (2350)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to ask the minister, how many jobs were there in this department and the housing authorities prior to the

change of boundaries, and how many jobs are there now?

Mr. Ernst: Let me seek some clarification. Are we talking about all of the Housing Authorities in the province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes.

Mr. Ernst: How many jobs were contained in all of the Housing Authorities in the province previously, and how many jobs are there now? [interjection] Okay.

There was a myriad of people who worked for Housing Authorities on a part-time basis—one day a week, half a day a week, two days a week, two hours a day. We had a number who opened the building in the morning and came back and closed it at night. That was their job for which they received \$6 an hour or whatever it was. So to be fair in terms of a comparison, there were 320 full-time equivalent jobs contained within the former Housing Authorities and Manitoba Housing's department staff. Under the MHA, there will be 280 full-time jobs, for a net loss of about 40.

In addition to that, we will have a number of contract positions, again, dealing with individuals who are not included in those numbers, contract positions that will be dealing with part-time work associated with individual properties or individual villages or towns or whatever. Interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, under the new Manitoba Housing Authority, there are actually more full-time positions than there were contained in the previous configuration of the 98 different Housing Authorities.

Ms. Wowchuk: These are all in rural Manitoba, or is this including the city?

Mr. Ernst: That is the whole—

Ms. Wowchuk: That is the whole thing. Okay.

What I am wanting to get at is: Have any jobs been decentralized out of the Housing Authority, or have any jobs moved? We hear a lot about the decentralization plan of this government and the jobs that are going to rural Manitoba. Have any jobs been decentralized from this department?

Mr. Ernst: I do not know that you can make a kind of a direct comparison. Obviously, there were Housing Authorities in rural Manitoba and there were Housing Authorities in the city of Winnipeg. Some people have chosen jobs within the system and chosen to take a job in Portage or Brandon or

Dauphin or whatever that was previously located in Winnipeg or some other place, but we are operating 10 offices; one in Winnipeg, nine in rural Manitoba. The staff complement in those offices is on an as-required basis. I would not like to say it is decentralized, because there were people out there before. At the same time, there were more full-time jobs than there used to be in terms of the overall scheme of things, and that would include rural Manitoba—a difficult comparison to make.

Ms. Wowchuk: So there have not been any jobs designated out of this department that have been designated to move from the city into rural Manitoba, no head office. No specific positions have been allocated for transfer to the rural community.

Mr. Ernst: I can say that in the first instance, when decentralization was being considered, it was determined by the government, both in terms of Housing Authorities and in terms of property management staff, that we are well decentralized as a department. In fact, we are excluded from the process of decentralization because of that, the fact that we did operate offices in addition to the housing authorities. Manitoba Housing operated offices of its own staff in Brandon, Dauphin, The Pas, Thompson and Churchill, so we are reasonably well decentralized.

No, the head office function of the MHA is in Winnipeg. It has not been decentralized. However, for instance, property management staff who supervised Eastman, Interlake and a portion of the central region operated from Winnipeg. Those operations now are decentralized, if you will, or moved to the district offices in Portage or in Selkirk or in Altona or Gimli, for that matter, so the staff who formerly operated out of Winnipeg to service those areas now will operate out of those locations. So in, I guess, the strictest sense, if you will, of decentralization, yes, there have been some decentralized. It is an academic exercise perhaps, or one that you may want to argue from time to time, but in fact that is exactly what happened, that we have some people who have been decentralized.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I will go into speed-up; otherwise I am going to miss my ride home from the good doctor from The Maples. So I will cut out my preambles. [interjection] How could I ask questions now, after he tells me that?

People who did not receive positions in the new Manitoba Housing Authority, were they encouraged

to apply for positions in the Civil Service or for decentralized positions in other departments?

Mr. Ernst: Perhaps because of the banter, I missed the earlier part of the question.

Mr. Martindale: Some people did not get positions that they applied for in the new Manitoba Housing Authority. Were those people encouraged to apply for vacancies in the Civil Service Commission or for decentralized positions in other departments?

* (0000)

Mr. Ernst: The simple answer is no. These people are not civil servants, therefore, not eligible to go on the re-employment list of the Civil Service Commission. However, those people who were unionized or under a collective agreement have gone on a re-employment list with the Manitoba Housing Authority, and in the event that positions open up for them, they would have the opportunity of being considered for those positions.

Mr. Martindale: One more question on the Manitoba Housing Authority, and then I think we will shut it down and ask the rest of the questions in the House—[interjection] Well, the minister will just have to answer without his staff, but I am sure he is quite capable of doing that [interjection] Well, on and off.

Within the last year, concerns have been raised to me by people in rural communities where there were small numbers of housing units, and they were afraid that they were going to lose staff in those communities. Now, I raised this in Question Period, and the minister indicated that none of those communities would be left without staff in their community.

I am just wondering if the minister could expand on that and assure me that there will be some kind of staff on call in those communities, and if so, would it be somebody responsible for maintenance or who would it be?

Mr. Ernst: The expectation is that there will be a contact in every community—now, whether you can deem it staff, considering there are two units in some little community, but there will be a contact available on an emergency basis or something like that—[interjection] Presumably the member—I am just waiting for him to complete his conversation so I can respond to his question.

Presumably, there will be some contact arrangement put in place for those people so that they will have a "local" person. These contracts will be entered into for that purpose.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have just one question on that. When does the minister expect to have those kinds of things in place, because again, and we talked about this—the uncertainty in the communities. There was a service there, the service is changed, these are elderly people.

When can we expect to have those people identified in the community whom people can contact?

Mr. Ernst: I would think relatively soon, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, another month or so perhaps.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 3. Transfer Payments to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation \$36,082,700—pass.

Resolution 85: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$36,082,700 for Housing, Transfer Payments to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

Item 4. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Emergency Home Repair Program \$500,000—pass.

4.(b) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Core Area Renewed Agreement: (1) Core Area Initiative Programs \$125,000—pass; (2) Less: Recoverable from Urban Affairs \$125,000—pass.

Resolution 86: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Housing, Expenditures Related to Capital, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Housing is Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for consideration of this item.

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

Resolution 83: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,886,400 for Housing, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

This concludes the consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Housing. The next department to be considered is Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

The hour being after 10 p.m., committee rise.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Status of Women. Estimates begin on page 146 in the regular Estimates book. Does the honourable Minister responsible for the Status of Women have an opening statement?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I am pleased to introduce the Estimates for the Status of Women portfolio for the 1992-93 fiscal year. As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I am pleased to touch on the successes of the past year and to anticipate some of our successes for the coming year.

As the members are aware, this portfolio includes both the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Manitoba Women's Directorate. Each plays a significant role in improving the status of women of Manitoba.

The advisory council is made up of women from all regions of the province representing a variety of backgrounds and interests. Council's role is to advise government on issues of concern to Manitoba women.

The Women's Directorate is a department of government charged with the responsibility for researching, analyzing and evaluating government legislation, policies and programs. It provides government with the research support and analyses that are needed in order to make informed decisions. The directorate assists other provincial government departments to ensure that their services reflect the needs and concerns of Manitoba women.

Too often, and to our detriment, women's concerns are seen as exclusively social issues. These issues are not solely the concern of women but of all society. During the past decade or so, we have seen the fields of economics, financial planning, business, the Constitution and others recognized as being of concern to women. In short, Madam Chairperson, all issues are women's issues and women's issues are everybody's issues.

Earlier this year, I introduced Bill 5, The Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women Amendment Act. I introduced this legislation to resolve the confusion of names between the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women. Confusion arises from the frequent use of their identical acronyms. While the name will

change, the mandate of council will remain the same.

As members are aware, Bill 5 has passed committee stage and is awaiting third reading in this Chamber. I anticipate that this legislation will be passed and that the change of name will proceed.

Council has directed much of its energy to the issues and concerns of single parenting and will soon release the single parent handbook, *Just Me and the Kids*.

I am also pleased to note that council is in the process of reviewing alternative substance abuse treatment programs for women. I anticipate their report will be completed this summer. Council also acted as a catalyst in setting up the Manitoba chapter of Women's World Finance and will continue to participate in this initiative to advance and promote the entrepreneurship of women.

Council has assisted in the development of a nonpartisan network which is working toward enhancing the representation of women judges. Council continues to monitor constitutional proposals to determine their effect on women and recently hosted a caucus of Manitoba women, which resulted in the preparation of a document reflective of the consolidated position of women with respect to the Constitution. This document was then presented to the Premier and a committee of cabinet.

Issues relating to the health and well-being of Manitoba women have also been addressed by council, including the working group on midwifery. Most recently, at its May '92 meeting, council identified education and training as its primary concern and focus for 1992-93.

Council anticipates the sponsorship of special events, research, community consultation and co-operation and collaboration with government will be undertaken to meet its goal and mandate of enhancing the status of women in Manitoba.

During the past year, the Manitoba Women's Directorate, in carrying out its dual mandate of research and analysis, outreach and consultation, has contributed to the development and implementation of a number of government initiatives.

One of the most significant successes of this past year was the collaborative development of the aboriginal women's policy by the Native Affairs secretariat and the Women's Directorate. The

introduction of the policy is part of our government's International Women's Day celebrations.

Over 200 aboriginal women participated in the provincial forum, the five regional meetings and in numerous local and individual meetings, which were held throughout Manitoba and which led to the establishment of this policy.

Through this policy our government acknowledges the aspirations and recognizes the potential of aboriginal women in Manitoba. No one better understands the challenges facing aboriginal women than the women themselves. It is this experience that I am counting on to assist us as we begin the process of putting the policy to work.

The next step, therefore, is to dialogue with aboriginal women throughout the province in order to explain the policy and to jointly identify priorities.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to aboriginal women through the provision of operational funding for Ikwe Widojiitiwin, the first urban-based shelter specifically for aboriginal women, as well as for the toll free provincial crisis line housed in this shelter to ensure access to assistance in a number of native languages.

We also provide funding for Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata and the Native Women's Transition Centre. The transition centre recently celebrated the official opening of its newly constructed facility, jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments in partnership with the community. We also facilitated the establishment of the Opasquiak Women's Resource Centre in The Pas.

In October of last year, our government released the Domestic Violence Review. At the time of the report, the Justice minister announced that 45 of the 75 recommendations made in the report were already being implemented or would be implemented immediately.

Among others, these measures include directing police to lay charges in all cases where evidence of partner abuse exists, mandatory prosecution of all partner abuse offences, initiatives to allow women quicker access to restraining orders, and expansion of the Family Violence Court outside of Winnipeg.

An advisory committee of community representatives and an interdepartmental committee were established shortly after the report was received to address some of the report's longer-term recommendations.

To meet the challenge of violence against women, we have introduced a number of initiatives. We have increased and stabilized funding for crisis shelters. Most recently, the Family Services minister, Harold Gillehammer, announced the infusion of an additional \$500,000 into the crisis shelter system representing a 10.4 percent increase.

This new funding has been earmarked to enhance a wide range of services for women and children. The Department of Housing has developed and implemented a special priority-placement policy and procedures for victims of domestic violence. Our government has supported community initiatives such as the Alternatives for the '90s conference and the inclusion of informational flyers in Winnipeg Hydro billings.

I am particularly proud of the national listing of violence-prevention materials produced last year by the Women's Directorate. This publication is currently being used in schools nation-wide and has received much acclaim. This document is currently being updated and will be tabled at the Status of Women federal/provincial territorial ministers' meeting in Whitehorse later this month.

The directorate has continued its work in support of the federal/provincial territorial Attorneys Generals' initiative: Gender Equality in the Justice System.. In fact, Manitoba has assumed the role of lead jurisdiction in this area among the Status of Women officials across the country.

Ministers responsible for the Status of Women look forward to the release of recommendations resulting from this initiative following the next meeting of Attorneys General this fall. Partnerships have been forged with organizations such as the Women's Institute. Working in collaboration, we have designed a model for our rural child care demonstration project.

The model, which builds upon existing programs, establishes a registry which will match available community caregivers with families in need of child care during peak seasons of farm operations. Plans call for the pilot registries to be set up in time for the 1992 harvest.

* (2010)

As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I am most interested in the education and training of Manitoba's young women. A particular priority of

mine is the development of strategies that encourage girls and young women to continue the study of maths and science and to pursue nontraditional careers. It is interesting to note that a recent study of enrollment patterns done by Education and Training's Curriculum Services Branch indicates that no strong gender distinctions are evident in the selection of maths and science courses in high school.

This evidence indicates that the under-representation lies at the post-secondary levels. I am pleased to note that Red River Community College, for example, is taking steps to address the gender issue through innovative techniques that encourage young women to pursue the study of maths, science and technology. I look forward to working with my colleague, the Honourable Rosemary Vodrey, Minister of Education and Training, to identify joint initiatives with respect to this important issue.

The establishment of Women's Directorate Outreach offices underscores our commitment to all Manitoba women. During the short time the Outreach offices have been operating, staff have co-ordinated and co-organized two major conferences: Midlife and beyond, and Alternatives to end violence against women.

Staff have established and maintained a toll-free information line. Outreach staff have assisted in and facilitated community development in rural and northern Manitoba through the provision of ongoing support and consultation to women's resource centres, groups and organizations, abuse committees and women's shelters. Staff have also participated in an advisory capacity on a wide variety of community and organization boards. I am pleased with the effectiveness of the directorate's Outreach efforts and I anticipate 1992-93 will prove to be an even more productive year.

I am proud of the progress and the success of both the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Manitoba Women's Directorate. During the coming year, each of these organizations will continue to respond to issues of concern and importance to Manitoba women.

Madam Chairperson: Does the critic for the official opposition wish to make an opening statement?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Yes, I would like to make what I hope will be a brief opening statement. I was interested in some of the issues

and some of the ideas that the minister has raised in her opening statement and will be asking a couple of questions on those later on.

This, as I think we always say, is a very small department in terms of money and in terms of staff, but a department that has the potential for having an enormous impact on the workings of government. It is frustrating not to be able to spend an adequate amount of time dealing with the issues that cross many, many departments and find, or should find, support in this department.

I would, however, like to talk briefly about just one report, actually, that the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women produced in November 1990, the Single-Parent Families Report. As I read this report today, I was struck, Madam Chairperson, by the fact that it is a year and a half old and yet the information and the concerns that are raised in this report, produced by the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women—the currency of the issues and the concerns raised in this report.

I think, for me, Madam Chairperson, it symbolizes what still needs to be done as far as dealing with the issues around the status of women. The minister earlier said that too often issues that deal with women or that are important to women are seen as exclusively social issues and that all issues are women's issues and women's issues are all issues. We have had this discussion regarding Bill 5, and will have at third reading. I have absolutely no quarrel with the statements made by the minister.

However, I think that what this report, the Single-Parent Families Report, points out is that, exactly that: all issues are women's issues. Particularly, financial issues are women's issues. I think that is where, in many cases, this government has fallen down, frankly, Madam Chairperson, particularly when we are talking about women in poverty, which make up the single largest group of poor people in our province; that—I am quoting from the report—it is necessary to recognize and understand the social, economic and political factors which interact to maintain many single-parent families in low-income situations.

We all have to do that. We must continue to be aware of the wide range of issues and problems that all come together in producing the problems that face women in Manitoba. Women in Manitoba are in poverty and have health problems and have social problems and have less access to political avenues largely because they do not have enough

financial resources; they do not have access to financial resources.

The statistics are abounding and we all have heard them in the last few weeks. I will not repeat them other than to say that women are the most poor in our province, in our country, throughout the world. Women do 65 percent of the work and have control of 10 percent of the assets throughout the world. Those are approximate figures, but it still is a very unequal world that we live in.

While statistics say that Manitoba women fare better than that in some areas of income, averaging between 67 and 70 percent of what a man earns, those figures have not really changed much in the last 20 or 25 years. So that is a major issue that must be addressed by all governments, the fact that women throughout their working lives, throughout their lives period, whether they work inside or outside the home, whether they work for financial remuneration or not, are by and large poorer than men throughout their lives. That has an impact on their health, on their social stability and certainly on their ability to have a quality of life that we feel is important to everyone.

We need to look at the fact that when women are poor, children are poor; that the vast majority of women in this country and in this province who are poor are parents of children. We all again know the problems that have occurred and continue to occur when single-parent households are not adequately supported in a financial sense.

Another thing that the Single-Parent Families Report states that I think is incredibly important, and I quote: Living conditions for families are strongly tied to level of family income. Access to housing, child care, developmental opportunities for children, education and training opportunities, material rewards and social networks are influenced by the availability of financial resources.

I think that sentence states that for us on this side of the House, that it all comes back to adequacy of financial resources and access to those financial resources. Women in this province are still unable to adequately and fairly and equitably access those resources.

Madam Chairperson, I would like briefly to speak to some of the recommendations that this Single-Parent Families Report made in November of 1990. In income maintenance, for example, which is an area of Family Services that I am familiar with, the recommendation is that the standard social

allowances rates and special needs allocations be substantially increased and that shelter allowances be increased to meet actual shelter costs.

Now this has not happened. In the latest round of increases, this still makes the social assistance rates, even the highest social assistance rates, only about half of what is identified as the poverty line. So social assistance recipients, the vast majority of whom are women, and the vast majority of whom are women with children, still have no access to even that basic minimum statement.

* (2020)

Again, the special needs allocation, \$150 a year, has not been changed in 30 years, and 30 years worth of governments—or at least 20 years worth of governments—have to take responsibility for that. I am certainly prepared to agree to that, but I have asked time and time again that that be looked at, a fairly small additional source of income, perhaps, that could make a major difference to many women.

Other recommendations deal with the provincial minimum wage being increased and particularly, Madam Chairperson, that pay equity and affirmative action be made priorities by the Manitoba government. I would just like briefly to comment on the fact that the Hay Report, which was originally released by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) last April, April 1991, a year later than it was supposed to have been released. However, my understanding is that the delay was a legitimate delay. But April 1991, well over a year ago, the minister promised to act as quickly as possible on its 50 recommendations.

In November 1991, some of the women on that original committee stated publicly that they were worried that their concerns were not being addressed appropriately by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik). Finally, at the end of March of this year, the Minister of Labour has appointed an advisory committee to help implement or talk about or do something about the Hay Report. In the meantime, women in the Civil Service are still being dealt with unfairly in many ways, as far as their access to pay equity and their access to an equal opportunity for employment.

Another major set of recommendations in this report put out by the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women dealt with child care. I will not go through them, but there were several major components. This report did say that this was one of the major areas that was a problem for women

with children, being able to access affordable, high-quality child care.

Again, we, on this side of the House, have very often shared our concerns with the year-old change in the fee structure for the child care system. The negative impact it is having on the availability of spaces, on the affordability of those spaces for families, and the increase it is having on families being forced to change their preferred type of child care, and in many cases to go to unlicensed and perhaps potentially dangerous situations. So again the government has access to a very positive report with many good recommendations and is not, in many important ways, we feel, dealing with these issues.

The minister talks about the need to deal with single parents and talks about the single-parent handbook that is being produced, which I am looking forward to seeing. The title is certainly evocative and, I am sure, will be very helpful. It would really, really be nice if the handbook, *Just Me and the Kids*, could be part of the resources available at, let us say, parent-child centres, which were a very successful part of the core area programming, and which were not picked up by the provincial government as a cost-effective, very grassroots, volunteer-driven program.

Madam Chairperson, I will briefly conclude my opening remarks. We are talking about the implementation of reports that the various ministers of this government have had, the Hay report, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Suche report, the Pedlar report, again, the Single-Parent Families Report, other reports, all of whom say much the same thing: for women to fully take their place in our society, the government must be proactive; the government must do all that it can to ensure that all of its own departments, all of its own programs, all of its own initiatives have as one of their keystones an understanding of the impact that those programs and initiatives have on the status of women. Because underlying all of this is the fact that no matter what indicator you use today, the status of women in the province of Manitoba is still by and large unacceptable. It is up to the government to ensure that those discrepancies and those unacceptable differentials in all areas of our life are reduced.

While there are some positive initiatives that the minister has brought forward tonight, I think that there are still very many areas where the

government has chosen not to make positive proactive stands. I will be asking some questions and look forward to the rest of the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable Leader of the second opposition party wish to make an opening statement?

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Chairperson, I am delighted to participate in the Estimates of the Status of Women and with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson). I want to just highlight some of the remarks that the minister made and to indicate where I will be coming from in the questioning this evening.

She mentioned Bill No. 5, and I have to say that I was disappointed with the progress of Bill No. 5, not because I did not recognize there was some confusion about the name, but because I thought there was a willingness on the part of the minister to listen to individuals who made representation and was interested in making a change that would be appropriate to their needs. It certainly appeared to me during the committee stage of that bill that the women who came, for the most part, wanted some reference to Status of Women, in some way, shape, or form in that particular title. The fact that the bill passed without that necessary phraseology, I think, indicated a lack of willingness which I thought the minister had had when she proceeded with the bill.

In addition she addressed a number of issues which the Manitoba advisory council has been on the forefront of addressing; one, of course, being the issue of the Constitution. They have been very forward thinking on the Constitution and have long advocated a protection for the Charter. I want to express tonight my very deep concern about what is happening to the Charter in the negotiations presently going on with the ministers, and First Ministers in some cases, that have been attending these marathon meetings which will begin again tomorrow.

There has certainly been the suggestion that the notwithstanding clause should be extended. Well, every time the notwithstanding clause is extended, the Charter is weakened. The provinces have the right to use the notwithstanding clause, the federal government has the right to use the notwithstanding clause, and now there appears to be a general willingness to extend the use of that notwithstanding clause also to the aboriginal community.

It seems to me that we are moving backwards. If there is to be any change in the notwithstanding clause, then it should be one that removes it from the governments that now have it, not extend it to an additional level of government; that the Manitoba advisory council would be well-served to look at this issue now in some detail to make representation because I can not imagine why we would want to weaken the Charter further. Certainly that has been contrary to the position of the advisory council repeatedly, over and over again.

* (2030)

The minister also mentioned that the council and indeed the directorate have been involved in the whole issue of midwifery. We now have an inquest on the death of a twin as a result of a midwifery delivery. There may be a whole series of positions taken on the issue of midwifery, but it seems to me it is very clear that we need rules and regulations, and we need to have clear standards. More and more women are turning to midwifery as an option. Some of them are also turning to home births.

I have serious reservations about home births. I know that certainly physicians do as well, and so do the registered nurses. But I do not think that anybody doubts that if we are going to have people functioning as midwives in the community, then there must be some regulation of those midwives, some guarantee that there is training, so that we do not see the loss of another child when that loss could have been prevented with clear protocols established by regulation.

The minister indicated that there would soon be released a single-parent handbook and I am pleased that it is going to be released, but the minister has a contract with a Sheena Walsh McMahon, which she signed, which does not seem to be in compliance at the present time. I want to know from her, if this single parent handbook is going to be duly noted as the work of Sheena Walsh McMahon, or whether it is going to be ascribed to somebody else, in what I think is in clear violation of a contract signed by the minister on September 6, 1991.

In terms of the issue which is now uppermost for the council as well as for the directorate, in terms of Education and Training, I was particularly interested in the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women's report on women in nontraditional occupations, its review and analysis of recent recommendations which I received in December of

1991. That particular report outlined the need for the concentration of the council on women. It clearly shows the underrepresentation of women in certain professions and particularly in the trades and in the technologies.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) must be aware that our community colleges have not served women particularly well in the technology areas. There still is highly underrepresentation in their training. The minister pointed out that the recent study conducted by the Department of Education indicated that it seemed to be mostly a post-secondary educational problem.

Well, I would point out to the minister that the criteria to graduate from high school means that there has to be the achievement of certain levels of skill in math and science. What it does not do, however, is to encourage those young women to go on into post-secondary education training. So to indicate that it is a post-secondary education training issue is, I think, understating the real fact.

The problem is that young people begin to look at occupations as early as junior high and if in that junior high milieu and senior high milieu there is not the role model, there is not the encouragement of these young women, not just to take the courses necessary for high school graduation, but in fact to pursue careers in the technologies, in the sciences, in the business administration fields, then obviously they are not going to choose to do so. So it is important that the council continue to work in this area in order to achieve, I think, a change in direction for young women in the province of Manitoba and in the country generally, quite frankly.

The Manitoba work force in this report is characterized by typical occupational distribution patterns for women and men. For example, the province currently has 53 female apprentices out of a total of 3,500, which is a clear indication that somewhere along the line young women were not encouraged to look at apprenticeship training as something that would fulfill them academically in terms of their career satisfaction.

As to the issues of interaction with other departments, we frequently ask questions about that, but I have to say that I do not see much action, whether it is in prevention programs, in health. We have, for example, the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country, statistically, and yet we are the only province that does not have a compulsory family life education program. I do not understand

that. The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) knows I do not understand that, and I would like to see more lobbying going on, quite frankly, from this department to change that orientation.

We know, for example, as of a recent report last week, that teenage girls are now smoking at a rate of 20 percent as opposed to teenage boys at a rate of 12 percent. It seems to me that teenage girls right now should be targeted for educational programming, so that the fixation we have with weight in our society is not used by these young women as an excuse to begin a life of addiction to nicotine, which not only causes them serious health problems but, as the minister knows, causes their babies serious health problems because low birth-weight babies are a clear result of smoking during pregnancy.

I have asked the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mrs. McIntosh) to be more proactive with regard to fetal alcohol syndrome. We know that women in pregnancy should not drink even as little as a drink a day. The costs of looking after a child with fetal alcohol syndrome can be as much as \$2.1 million.

I have asked for signs in liquor stores. You know, we can make up signs on our Xerox machines. I would donate the Xerox machine and get them out, but we do not seem to be able to move. I do not understand why we are so mired in concrete in issues that are so simple to resolve as that one.

I do not even have a commitment from the minister to write a letter to the national Minister of Health who said, he will not act about labelling until he hears from ministers across the country. Well, surely it would take the minister all of 15 minutes to dictate a letter to the national Minister of Health saying he would be interested in seeing labelling warning women of the dangers of consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

If we can put signs on cigarette boxes, certainly we can put signs on liquor bottles which could prevent what is an extremely costly and very debilitating illness for the youngsters who are born with this particular syndrome.

So it is not that I do not feel that this particular department has a lot of functions, I just do not feel that it has the influence with other ministers that I believe it should have. There does not seem to be nearly as much advocacy work going on from this particular department as I think there should be. In Family Services issues which were addressed by

the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), and which I will not address, but in health issues, in education issues, in liquor issues, in apprenticeship training issues—because without that effective lobbying I do not see that the status of women issue as it affects all women in the province of Manitoba is going to undergo a significant change. With that, Madam Chairperson, I think we can begin the questioning of the minister.

* (2040)

Madam Chairperson: At this time I would request the minister's staff to please enter the Chamber.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would just like to introduce the staff that are here tonight. On my left immediately is Theresa Harvey, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Women's Directorate and beside her is Olivia Flynn who is the executive director of the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

On my immediate right is Myroslava Pidhirnyj, manager of the Policy Unit in the Women's Directorate and Dorothy Hill who is the manager of the Outreach Unit in the Women's Directorate.

Ms. Barrett: So I am hoping that we can range throughout the department since the staff from both sections are here tonight. I have a question about the Women's Directorate. There was recently or has been a staff position in the North, in The Pas/Thompson. I am wondering if the minister can give us an update on the status of that position.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, there was a vacancy in the Outreach office in The Pas. Edith Young, who was in that position went to work to do some, I believe it was, consulting for The Pas Indian Band. So a vacancy did occur. We had a bulletin, a competition process, and there has been a person hired by the name of Catherine Cooper, who will be working out of that Outreach office.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister tell us if that Outreach office is going to be located in The Pas?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That Outreach office has been in The Pas since it was opened. As a result of the Outreach office being there, The Opasquiak Resource Centre has been established in The Pas. That does meet some of the needs. There is also a need in Thompson for some outreach work. Therefore, Catherine Cooper will be working between Thompson and The Pas so that we can expand services to Thompson as well as to The Pas.

Ms. Barrett: I am not completely familiar with the distances between The Pas and Thompson, but it is several hours. I think, usually, that trip is made by car rather than plane. I do not see in the Women's Directorate Estimates any change in transportation allowances at all, which I would have expected to see since the position originally, before the vacancy occurred, was only in The Pas and now the position is being split. So I am wondering if the minister can share that with me.

I also see a decrease, actually, a slight decrease, in the communication budget. So I am wondering how that fits with the fact that this position is going to be split between The Pas and Thompson.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is significant travel throughout the northern region of our province in dealing with the Women's Directorate, so we do not anticipate that there will be terribly great additional travel costs as a result.

I would like to indicate that because the Seniors Directorate and the Women's Directorate share outreach activities, part of the travel budget is in the Seniors Directorate and part is in the Women's Directorate also. But we do not anticipate there will be a greater amount of travel. The person did travel throughout the North and will continue to do that. Part of the time will be spent in an office in The Pas; part will be spent in Thompson.

Ms. Barrett: The position which was fully in The Pas, or based in The Pas, and now is split between The Pas and Thompson, can the minister explain why, when Thompson is a much larger community and has perhaps not enough but more resources to service the women of that community, why it was felt necessary to split this position between The Pas and Thompson, when The Pas has far fewer resources to assist women?

Mrs. Mitchelson: At the time the Outreach office was established in The Pas there was a women's resource centre in Thompson. That has since moved to Flin Flon, so there is no resource centre and there is no Outreach component in Thompson at the present time.

In The Pas, as a result of the Outreach office for the Women's Directorate opening, there was established a women's resource centre and that was sort of a spin-off, if you might say, of the Women's Directorate having a presence in The Pas. Now that that resource centre is up and running, we feel that we need to concentrate some effort on

providing some resources for the large area that Thompson and the surrounding communities, the large number of women that Thompson and the surrounding communities serve.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the resource centre that is in The Pas, that the minister talks about, is that the Opasquiak Women's Resource service?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister tell us how that resource centre is funded?

Mrs. Mitchelson: They are funded through the Department of Family Services. It is a northern women's resource centre and it is a satellite.

Ms. Barrett: It is a satellite of the resource service that is located in Thompson?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it used to be located in Thompson, it is now located in Flin Flon.

Ms. Barrett: So the funding for both the parent, if you will, resource centre which is now in Flin Flon and the resource centre in The Pas is out of the grants to external agencies from the Department of Family Services then?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask a different question on something that the minister spoke about earlier in her opening remarks and that was—excuse me, if I do not get the title exactly correct—the rural child care registry. I am wondering if the minister can provide us with a little more detailed information on that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, on an annual basis, the members of the provincial cabinet meet with the Women's Institute when they hold their annual meeting and discuss issues of concern. A few years in a row or since I have been—I know I have attended at least two or three yearly meetings with the Women's Institute.

They have always raised the issue of the unique circumstances of farm families and farm women, who are certainly very much a part of the process during seeding and harvest time and are doing more work actually on the farm than looking after children these days. There is a unique circumstance where there are not always caregivers or women do not know where they can find caregivers to come into the home and look after their children through the extended hours that might be required for a farm woman to be out of her home and not able to care

for her children. As a result, I think sometimes we see children being taken along and, ultimately, in some cases, see some very severe accidents as a result of that kind of thing happening.

* (2050)

So the Women's Institute has raised this to government, and probably has been raising it for many years, even through former administrations. Last year, as a result of my becoming the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I made a commitment that I would look into the issue and see whether in fact there was a way that we could work with them to develop a program that might meet the unique circumstances of farm women during these really tough times.

I came back and met with the Women's Directorate and asked my colleagues in the Department of Family Services and the Department of Agriculture, whether our staff could get together and try to help in some way the Women's Institute in developing a program that they felt could specifically meet the needs of farm women. Our departments got together, have met with the Women's Institute; and, as a result of those discussions and having the Women's Institute know what kinds of things are currently ongoing, there is the—and I just have to get the names—Manitoba youth employment services registry through the Department of Family Services, and in the Department of Agriculture, agricultural employment services branch. They already have offices up and running: six for Agriculture and 44 for the youth program in the Department of Family Services.

Anyway, there are some services available out there. The Women's Institute has a sense that if a registry could be developed, and people could put their names on a registry indicating their willingness to provide support for farm women or farm families, I guess, in those very specific times, that in fact they would be prepared to develop and run that kind of an initiative.

So the Women's Institute in conjunction with working with the Department of Family Services, the Department of Agriculture and the Women's Directorate I think are prepared to put forth a pilot project in three different communities throughout the province in time for harvest of 1992.

Ms. Barrett: So the Manitoba youth employment registry and the Agriculture employment services branches are going to be the locations for these

registries, and the registries will be developed and run by W.I. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, that is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister tell us which communities are going to be part of this pilot project?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think the Women's Institute just issued a news release last week with their intent, and they are going to be consulting with communities and looking for community response to the initiative. Then we will pick the communities based on the support from the community and the response that they receive.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister say whether, other than having the access to the office base through the Family Services and Agriculture departments, there will be any other government funding going into this pilot project?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, at this point in time there is no other funding. I know the Women's Institute is the one that is driving this.

Ms. Barrett: Will this then be—and I am trying not to use the word in a pejorative context—but simply a registry? I guess what I am asking, is there going to be any assurances that the individuals who put their names on such a registry are, in fact, capable and qualified to not only provide child care, but are going to provide a quality of care that the farm families can be comfortable with. Is there any check list of background or anything of that nature?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Given that it is not a government-run program as such, it is a Women's Institute initiative, the cautions of course that we shared with them were that, in fact, those that are hiring people and accessing a registry of any sort, should in fact ensure or ask that criminal backgrounds and records be checked.

The responsibility or the onus, I suppose, would lie with the family that is hiring the care giver to ensure that those checks are done and ask for the opportunity to review personal records and also information, I guess, about the kind of training that they have had.

Ms. Barrett: This is getting down to the problem that I have had since this kind of registry was first brought forward and discussed in this House in Family Services Estimates. I again will share with the minister our deep concern that I do not think that it has ever been more apparent than through the

situation that has taken place outside Saskatoon. I mean, that is just an abhorrent situation, but it is different in scope than situations that have occurred in all parts of our country. I think that is one of the reasons why we, over the years, have developed licensing regulations and this training for child care in Manitoba.

I know that this is a different situation and that we are looking at a much more specific time-limited kind of care that is being asked for here, and there is not the time nor the resources, probably, to go through the kind of checking and the kind of training that we do in our licensed child care spaces.

* (2100)

But I do think the idea that if the government is involved even only in giving moral support and providing office space to the Women's Institute to do this, the government has the responsibility to not have this child care registry be simply operated on a caveat emptor situation, "let the buyer beware."

I cannot say strongly enough that when we are dealing with the lives of our children we have to ensure that basic regulations and basic training is in place.

I know that the problems are enormous that these farm families are facing and the safety concerns of these families for their children, particularly when they are either left in the home because both parents have to work on the seeding and harvesting or taken with their parents while they are undertaking, that is a real problem, and we must address that.

But I think that not providing for some basic guidelines is a mistake and that the Women's Institute and the government perhaps should look at instituting some basic questions that are asked or some basic investigation that is done, not just in the criminal backgrounds and records, but also, as the minister spoke in her last answer, the training; that there be first-aid training or some type of training or orientation undertaken by these people.

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I said earlier, given that the Women's Institute is going to be running this pilot, I think we have stressed the issues with the Women's Institute. I just have to sit back and put myself in a situation where I come from a small community where you might not have people with major skills sort of sitting around waiting for seeding or harvest time to come in and look after my children while I have to go out and help my husband on the fields.

Very often in those communities there are women that would love to go around and ask all of their neighbours, in fact, whether they would be prepared. They would even prefer to have their neighbours put their name on a registry that would indicate that they might be willing to baby-sit and look after children, and it makes it a more approachable type situation.

I know training is an issue, but I also do know, too, that there are many women that have brought up their families, and may have been just farm wives, who certainly know how to care for and look after children. In fact, if those women were willing to put their name on a registry and be utilized in a situation to help a neighbour or someone in the community, I believe that is what the Women's Institute is looking for, those kinds of people that will put their names forward.

Now I do know that if you are in a community and looking on a registry when people within the community are not familiar to you, I think those are the issues that we have more concern with, and I think you and I would be more concerned if I did not—you know. Yes, there is an issue around checking criminal records and we have indicated that we would certainly help the Women's Institute implement that kind of a process and help them to access records.

I might tend to think that training, and first-aid training certainly would be a prerequisite, but there probably are—I would say that the best person that ever looked after my children was my mother who had a Grade 8 education and was at home and brought up three children, and I think we have all been fairly successful in our lives and our careers.

She was the very best person that could look after my children. She did not have a lot of credentials; she did not have a first-aid course. She baby-sat for a little bit of extra money when we were growing up for many people in the community. I know there is the other side to the issue too, but sometimes I think in a small community where people are fairly well-known and they are not quite sure whether somebody might be interested, but you do know that if they put their name on a registry, you could approach them to baby-sit.

That might be part of the solution, so there are two sides to this issue. There is one side that tells me that you have to be very careful whom you are having come into your home to look after your children, and if it is a total stranger to the community

and to you, I think that the checks and balances and the training might be extremely important. I do think too that there are probably some pretty qualified women out there that might not have the expertise and any background formal training, who might be very capable and very competent. I think that is what the Women's Institute that has dealt with the community that they represent for many, many years feels is a need in the community, and it is something that is going to have to be watched closely.

Ms. Barrett: Just one final comment. I agree that there are very many capable, qualified-through-experience people in all communities, and we all know many of those. I think the concern I have is not with the 99.99, it is that one-tenth of 1 percent. I know the problems that are inherent in establishing something like this and the flexibility that is required and I wish the Women's Institute all the best of luck. I just hope that it works out well, and we will be looking forward to seeing, I hope, some more press releases and information as it unfolds. Frankly, I will be figuratively crossing my fingers, because I hope that it is very successful, but I am still concerned.

I have another question, if I may, on something the minister referenced in her opening remarks about, I believe, the examination of the existing substance abuse programs for women. Is that what you were talking about in your opening remarks? It is part of the Expected Results on the advisory council, and the paragraph talks about: to present recommendations to the government dependent on the conclusions drawn from preliminary studies, and it has a date of April 1992. I think that has not happened yet, and I am wondering if the minister can give us an update on that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, in the Expected Results it did say April of '92, and I guess the project was put aside and delayed because of some other priorities that did come up. One of the priorities, of course, was the briefs that had to be prepared through the Meech Lake and the constitutional debates that they felt was of priority. They also did undertake the Winning Women Conference in January of 1991, so it was one of those reports that did get delayed, and in fact they are anticipating that it should be ready by the fall of this year.

Ms. Barrett: I just have a couple of informational questions and then I will turn it over to the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs). In the Salaries,

item 4, the Women's Directorate—that is page 21 of the Supplementary Estimates—there is an item called Interchange agreement for \$51,800. I am wondering if the minister can share with us what that Interchange agreement is.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Janet Fontaine, who used to work in the Women's Directorate as manager of Outreach, is on an interchange with the federal government. Her salary is \$51,800. It shows up in the Estimates in the Salaries line, but in fact it is recovered by the Province of Manitoba and goes into general revenue. We have to show it in the Women's Directorate, because we pay it, but in fact the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) gets the money back.

Ms. Barrett: A follow-up question, if I may. May I ask why the Minister of Finance does not return that money to the Women's Directorate, or has that question already been asked?

* (2110)

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is a normal process that is followed when monies are expended, that usually revenues do come back into the ministry of Finance. What you see here, though, is a major increase in the Salaries line, which does, in fact, increase the budget of the Women's Directorate by \$51,800, more so because we have filled that position, but we are still paying it. So we got an increase in our budget line, but the money goes back through to the Department of Finance.

Ms. Barrett: One other question. I do not know if this is really a serious question or not, but I was struck when I went through the book, on page 9, Schedule 2, the organizational chart, there is no connection either with a dotted line or something else between the Minister, the ADM and the advisory council. Is that traditionally how it has been, that it is just two separate—

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed by staff that, when this document was sent over to the Queen's Printer for printing, there was a dotted line. I guess I may have to—yes, take issue, given that I am responsible for the Queen's Printer also—ask that question of them. It was there when it was sent over, and it got inadvertently left out.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I am glad to hear that the minister is responsible for the advisory council even on charts. She certainly signs her contracts. Would she now like to tell me if the contract which she signed on September 6, 1991, is

in fact going to be fulfilled with regard to Sheena McMahon?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, yes, the contract is signed with the government of Manitoba mainly because we have the responsibility to provide funding under statute to the advisory council and the Status of Women for their undertakings, but in fact the contract was between the advisory council and the Status of Women and Sheena Walsh. There has to be a ministerial authority in the signing of the contract. It was undertaken by them to provide information for the booklet, the single-parent handbook.

Mrs. Carstairs: The contract is far more explicit than that, Madam Chairperson. The contract states, and I quote: The contractor will prepare the report in consultation with the advisory council. The contractor will be acknowledged as author of the text.

The minister indicated that this handbook will soon be released. Is Sheena Walsh McMahon going to be acknowledged on this handbook as the author of this handbook?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, she will be recognized as the researcher but not as the author.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister explain why she will be in clear violation of her own contract which says she will be acknowledged as the author of the text?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that because not all of the text was used, that in fact what she produced was compiled into a handbook, that she will not be credited as the author.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is it normal for the minister to sign a contract saying that somebody will be acknowledged as author of the text, then produce a text to which the individual will not be credited as being the author?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, in Schedule A of the contract that was signed, it indicates that the services to be provided by the contractor are as follows, and I will read them into the record:

Preparation of a written report; satisfactory in form and content for the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women containing: (a) written information on access to services for single-parent mothers; (b) incorporation into the text a listing of service agencies; (c) initial draft to be prepared for

September 30, 1991; and (d) such other matters that may be reasonably requested by the council, and the contractor will prepare the report in consultation with the advisory council, the contractor will be acknowledged—it says here—as the author of the text.

But the author of the text that was requested by the Manitoba advisory council, there was a lot of information in the report that was not requested by the advisory council and therefore it was edited, and she will be given credit with the research.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, did the minister choose to exercise Section 12, which was termination of this contract, which could have been done at any time giving 15 days notice in writing to the contractor? If they did not exercise that, then why are they denying the authorship of this particular contractor?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In fact, I was not involved in the negotiations between the Manitoba advisory council and the person they were contracting to do the work. It was a matter that was discussed. I did sign the contract, because the advisory council forwarded it to me and it has to be signed legally by a minister. They report to me. They are an arm's-length council of government. It was their determination that this was the person who could do the job within the parameters that were stated. In fact, the material had to be altered substantially that was presented to them.

Mrs. Carstairs: If they want to indicate that somebody has edited the text, it is quite appropriate to say that somebody has edited it; that does not take away from the authorship. Editing is to delete, remove certain materials, but not to deny the work that has been done by an individual. We are talking about a women's issue here, where a Minister responsible for the Status of Women and women whose rights, under a contract, are being violated, and the minister stands here and says, I am wiping my hands of this thing, despite the fact that she signed it. She cannot say I signed it because I am the minister responsible, but I do not have anything to do with this organization.

* (2120)

She signed the contract because she is the only one who can legally sign it and she is, therefore, legally liable for everything included in this contract—everything—and any legal counsel will point that out to her. Now what is she suggesting

that I tell my constituent, that she should sue the minister because the minister has failed to exercise the requirements of a contract duly signed by the minister?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it is my understanding that the information that was provided by Sheena Walsh was altered so significantly that she could not be given credit for the authorship of it, and any legal advice that we have indicates that the advisory council made the right decision.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, on what basis are they listing Ms. McMahon as the researcher? If none of the information she provided was valid for this particular report and none of the information is going to be used, then why in heaven's name would they declare her to be the researcher?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it is my understanding that she gathered information on a lot of services that were available to single-parent families and it had also to be added to before it was in the final form. Not all of the information that was required was provided.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I am going to move on to some other topics that I want to discuss, but I want to lay on the record that I think it is a tragedy that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women would in fact abuse a woman in the way in which this woman has been abused by this particular department.

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

I would like to ask the minister some questions with regard to the program which will be set by the Women's Institute with regard to farming families, an initiative that they have been looking at for some time and which I am pleased to see will come to fruition, and ask if they will have at their disposal the right to access the Child Abuse Registry for all individuals who register with this particular program.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, yes they will.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is there to be any limitation placed on the number of children that any one individual will be able to register to care for, similar to, for example, family daycare requirements presently in place?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I think indications from the Women's Institute are that a

caregiver would go into a family home to look after the family children, so it would be one family.

Mrs. Carstairs: I asked that question because in my discussions with the Women's Institute, there was also some discussion about perhaps making some unused classrooms available as centres that they might be able to use. I gather from the minister's nods, these are not going to be part of this present initiative.

Mrs. Mitchelson: At this point in time, no, this is purely to meet the needs in the home of those women or those farm families who are in need.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is there to be a structured length of time? I know this is primarily for seeding and for harvesting, but will there be any limitations placed on this pilot project, for example, a six-week time limit, and then, with the option, of course, of the parents, if it is a workable situation, of continuing?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is no formal time limit on it. I guess the pilot projects—they are hoping to get up and running for this fall's harvest season, and probably the pilot then, if you look at it, starting now and going through till the end of that would be about six months, would be evaluated at that point.

Mrs. Carstairs: Would it be the Women's Institute that is doing the evaluation, or will someone from the child care office be asked to do any kind of an evaluation as to whether this is a workable project and something that may even be worth funding sometime in the future?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It will be the Women's Institute that will be evaluating. It is not an initiative of the daycare office; it is an initiative of the Women's Institute. We were able to facilitate finding places where they could keep registries and that kind of thing, but, in fact, it was not developed by the child care office.

Mrs. Carstairs: In terms of the set of appropriations for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women—and if the minister wants to know where I am coming from, it is the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, page 17—it indicates that there are four staff and no change from the previous year. In terms of the Managerial and the Administrative Support, the salary increases are well within the normal range, in fact, for the managerial position, very low. But, in terms of the professional/technical person, there was an 18 percent wage increase. Can the minister explain

why there was such a major increase in salary for this particular staff year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that the person in the position went from a term position into a permanent position and was reclassified to the working level.

Mrs. Carstairs: At first glance, it would appear that this department received a 13.8 percent increase. The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) asked a question that I was going to, with regard to the interchange agreement, which means virtually a deletion of \$51,800 from the department. Although the government gets it back, the department does not get it back. So realistically, the increase for this department was not 13.8 percent. It was 3.75 percent. Is that correct?

* (2130)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me if the Manitoba advisory council's group that has been and has done excellent work in looking at the Constitution is presently engaged in monitoring the constitutional proposals presently being debated in Ottawa, which our minister tells us there are no texts for to date, and the national minister Mr. Clark indicated, in a Globe and Mail article today, that there were indeed texts and there were in fact signed agreements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Any information that our Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has passed on to us, he has passed on to the House. In fact, there are no signed agreements from our Minister of Justice, and there is no prepared text.

I sometimes wonder, from the reports that we read from Joe Clark and the reports that we receive from our Minister of Justice, whether they have been at the same meetings. But, nonetheless, we have nothing that is prepared text and nothing that I am aware of that is in agreement.

Mrs. Carstairs: The minister will know that I feel this is all part of a national government strategy. It has very little to do with the provincial government but everything to do with the way in which negotiations were conducted two years ago and are presently being conducted second time around.

Has the advisory council raised with her the concern that I raised a few minutes ago about the extension of the notwithstanding clause and the weakening of the Charter effect as a result of

another level of government being given the opportunity to access that notwithstanding clause?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, no, that issue has not been raised by the advisory council, although, you know, I do not know whether in fact they have taken a formal position or have done any consultation as a result of the new development that has been announced looking at extending the notwithstanding clause to the aboriginal community.

I cannot indicate, and I would have to go back and ask the chair of the advisory council whether in fact they have pulled together the PC caucus, what they are monitoring and what their sense is. I would tend to think that they would be opposed, but I would hate to prejudge that based on not having heard.

I am meeting with the chair of the advisory council tomorrow afternoon, I believe. So that certainly is an issue that I could raise with her and ask whether there has been any formal or informal discussion throughout the province on that issue.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would ask the ministers to do that, and if there are any positions taken by the Manitoba advisory council—and I do not expect them to have a position by tomorrow—I would very much like to receive them because of their fine work that they have done on the Constitution. I hope that they will continue to act as a lobby group, not only for the rights of women to be protected by the Charter, but the rights of all individuals who are protected by the Charter.

I would like to move into the initiative. The minister indicated that the primary initiative this year will focus on education and training. Can the minister outline for us how they intend to pursue this particular challenge?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I cannot at this point in time indicate to you exactly what the plans are by the advisory council and how they are going to approach it. I guess they have just, as a result of a fairly new council being appointed, had a few meetings and have discussed around the table that education and training is an area that needs to be focused on by an advisory council to government. So I have not had a clear sense of exactly how they are going to approach the issue and what they are going to recommend.

Mrs. Carstairs: In the publication called Women in Nontraditional Occupations, they highlighted a number of areas that were of concern to them.

Has the minister discussed with them the fact that many of the areas that they raise as a concern, particularly training in the technologies and training at the community college level, have in fact been reduced by this government over the last two years so that there are fewer community college positions now available for men and women in 1992 for the academic year '92-93 than were available in 1990-91?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess if we want to look to Red River Community College specifically and what they might be doing to address some of the gender issues that do exist, they have initiatives underway, and the Red River Community College's women's programs department does continue to emphasize the importance of girls and women in math and science. There are different ways that they attempt to accomplish that. They introduce female junior and senior high school students to the engineering technology programs through the School Career Symposia. They are actively participating in outreach activities in the community, such as the planning and co-ordinating of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature's Women of Invention exhibit.

That is one I do not know whether either of the opposition critics has had the opportunity to see, but we had the opportunity at the Women's Institute banquet to hear—I am trying to think of the woman inventor, who was just absolutely dynamic, speak; it is a very nontraditional job that she does have. Her name does escape me now. But I think it is a very worthwhile exhibit.

They are doing writing at Red River Community College on articles about women who are involved in the technologies. Each year from August to December the women's program department offers pretechnology for women. I guess during the formal review programs at Red River Community College the issue of encouraging women to apply and to remain in the trades and technologies is raised. They are also considering the possibility of sponsoring girls and women in the math and science symposium held for the last 11 years at the University of Winnipeg. So, they are attempting to deal with some of the issues at the community college level.

Mrs. Carstairs: They may be attempting to do it, Mr. Acting Chairperson, but the reality is there are fewer places, and that means there are fewer places for young women. I want the minister to know that so that she can increase her lobbying efforts with

the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), because we can have all the programming in the world, but if there are fewer young people who are going to get into those programs, that means fewer young people who are going to get into those programs, and that impacts on her ministry.

The advisory council also went on to say in this report that it wished to acknowledge and commend several efforts which are now underway in the Apprenticeship branch, Manitoba Labour. For the first time women have been appointed to the trades advisory committees, which direct trade qualifications or vocations. Public education initiatives targeted at recruiting more women into the trades have also been launched, including an arts contest featuring women's trades in the '90s. Not coincidentally, Manitoba also has the first and only female director of Apprenticeship in Canada.

Well, unfortunately, we no longer have the first and only female director of apprenticeship in Canada, because that individual was moved out of this particular head position by the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik).

Can the minister tell us if she knew of that lateral transfer and if she does not think that is a backward step according to her own advisory council's report?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I know Ms. Kenney had been given the dual responsibility of the Apprenticeship and Training branch and the executive director of the Pay Equity Bureau and due to the very heavy workload of the two branches and consideration to her health, in fact, she was given sole responsibility for the Pay Equity Bureau. I do not think this should be interpreted in any way as a demotion or an indication of any dissatisfaction with her performance.

* (2140)

In fact, the position that is open right now in the Apprenticeship and Training branch of the Department of Labour will go through the competitive process and, hopefully, we will have some positive results in recruitment and filling of that position.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, I was very careful to say that it was a lateral transfer, because I do not think that it was, in any way, a demotion. I would not want it to be seen as that. The interesting juxtaposition is that it would have been a very interesting position if a man had been made head of Pay Equity, an interesting role model for a man to find himself in,

just as it was a wonderful role model for women that the director of Apprenticeship in the province of Manitoba was indeed a woman. The movement was made in such a way that I think we lost an opportunity in terms of creating the very role models that I think are part of what is necessary to make the system work, that one can hope now that perhaps the new director of Apprenticeship is also going to be a woman and maybe we can go on the record as saying we have had the first two female director of Apprenticeships in the country.

The minister also addressed, and I know I am jumping, but I know we also want to get through that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Sveinsson): Would the committee like to take a five minute recess? [Agreed]

* * *

The committee took recess at 9:43 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 9:48 p.m.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Carstairs: In her opening remarks and again on page 19 of the Supplementary Estimates reference is made to the production of an updated edition of Violence Prevention Materials in the Schools - a National Listing.

Can the minister comment on the statement of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) the other day in this House, in which he indicated that education does nothing to prevent violence and indicated that he regretted that, but that he did not believe that education materials or indeed education within the schools would do anything to prevent family violence?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I am not going to comment on the Minister of Finance's statements. I am not sure in what context they were spoken.

We do know and we do believe that violence issues can be and should be addressed through the education process, and there are all kinds of activities ongoing throughout communities and provinces across the country. It was an initiative that was undertaken with Manitoba as the lead a few years ago to compile the list of initiatives that are ongoing throughout the country to be shared, so that in fact you know if something was available there would not be duplication of that initiative undertaken by one province when it had already been tried and

worked and was successful in another. We have compiled that.

We have been dealing through the Ministers of Education. There was a joint meeting last September with the Ministers of Education and the Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. Subsequent to that, after raising the issue, I wrote to all the Ministers of Education across the country and asked for their assistance in updating the listing of what was happening in their provinces. We have had good co-operation from the Ministers of Education across the country, and as a result we have a major update to be undertaken on the national listing.

* (2150)

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell us just where this listing can be accessed? Is it available in every school in the province? Will the updated listing also be made available to every school in the province?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, we are just in the process of compiling and having that updated document printed. It will be available on a broad basis. Yes, it will be provided to every school throughout the province.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, on page 19, under the Women's Directorate, Expected Results, it talks about developing a database which will include information respecting community contacts and resources, statistical information which will facilitate government decision making as it affects women.

Can the minister explain a little more in detail what elements will be in that database and the status of that database now?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It will be a database that will include information regarding occupations of women, salary ranges, the demographics, et cetera.

Ms. Barrett: The occupations, salary ranges and demographics, will that be done on a geographical basis so that we will have data, for example, for The Pas, so we will know how many women there are in The Pas, what their occupations, salary ranges, and the demographics are that are found for those women?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Some of the information is available presently through Stats Canada. There is information available in some other departments. There are organizations like the Social Planning Council that have some statistics and data. What we are trying to do is pull all of that together, and

there will be some in-house work, also, done on compiling that data. But there is some of that information there, out there and available, in not a terribly comprehensive or co-ordinated fashion.

Ms. Barrett: What position would be responsible for doing that work?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That would be done out of the Policy Analyst division.

Ms. Barrett: Also under Expected Results in the Women's Directorate is an intriguing line: "The development of a women's perspective for input into the government's economic strategy" at page 18. I am wondering if the minister can clarify or put some meat on those bones of that sentence.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wonder if I could ask, was it under Expected Results and which—

Ms. Barrett: At the bottom of page 18 under Women's Directorate.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, you know, I really believe that it is important that we look at what women might have to contribute and might have to offer as far as our economic strategy in government goes, and you know we do know and I listened to the opening remarks very carefully of the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) when she indicated that women are still disadvantaged financially in our province, that we are still on a general broad basis earning less than men, and possibly working harder.

I guess what will be happening through this, looking at what women across the province feel is, through the outreach component of the Women's Directorate, listening to women and their perspective on what they can bring to the table and to government so that in fact we will have the opportunity for first-hand input into development of our ongoing strategy to deal with the economy, to deal with unemployment, to deal with job creation and to deal with the issues that do directly affect women.

If I might sort of regress a little bit and look at, you know, the high number of teenage pregnancies that we do have in our province, and I did some consultation last year with several communities throughout the province on what some of the issues were surrounding teenage pregnancy and how communities, especially outside the city of Winnipeg, were feeling about the problem. You know, some of the comments that were made go beyond just the significant numbers of teenage pregnancies, but in fact go to the reasons in some

instances why teenagers do become pregnant and end up being single mothers at a very young age.

The community input that I received indicated to me that, you know, there were many young women out there who felt that they would have a better life as a result of becoming pregnant, having a baby, keeping that child, being set up by social services in their own apartment, and that in fact they came from very troubled home situations for whatever reason and that in fact they felt it would be a better way of life to be on their own and to have some support systems in place. It is a real concern to a lot of communities. So I guess the issue of teenage pregnancies sort of goes beyond just the numbers of young women that are becoming pregnant and keeping their children and looking for an escape from the kind of life that they had been living.

You know, I guess the problem is even deeper than what we might expect, and there are no easy solutions to solving that problem because unless you get to the root of the problem and find out why girls are doing this, and why in fact, counselling is not done to provide—I suppose we have to look at information regarding—I am sort of talking in circles, but—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I am. But, first of all, information provided to young girls on options, and I suppose if they think that getting pregnant and keeping a baby is going to give them a better way of life, why are we not doing more counselling to provide options to young girls, encouraging them to continue along with their education and possibly encouraging them to give up that child for adoption? In fact, I know many, many families that are waiting up to seven, eight, nine years now to adopt a child.

* (2200)

You know, we see higher and higher instances of young girls keeping their children, so there are many problems that are associated with some of the reasons for women being in lower income brackets. You know, it is off to a pretty bad start in life when you might be 16 years old, have a baby, decide to keep it, to have difficulty getting back into the work force or being retrained and having the additional burden of a young child to look after.

Ms. Barrett: I certainly will not respond as fully as I would like to, to some of the interesting things the minister has raised in this area.

I think in a partial answer to the minister's discussion about needing to get to the root of the problem and asking the question, why are we not providing more counselling and information and options to young women in this particular area?—I am sure the same question could be asked in many areas.

I would suggest that—and I am not being facetious here, I am being very serious—the Minister responsible for the Status of Women ask that question, not of the opposition, but of her own colleagues in cabinet; that she ask that question of the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer); that she ask that question of the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey); that she particularly ask that question of the members of Treasury Board who are the ones who make the ultimate determination as to what the bottom-line figures are going to be.

It is those decisions; it is not the not the decisions made by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) with less than \$1 million in her budget. It is the decisions that are made by the rest of the government that are part of the answer to that very legitimate question.

It gets back to what I said earlier, that the basic answers to many of these questions are economic. That is, perhaps, too narrow an answer, but it is one of these, I believe seriously, one of the single most important answers to the questions that are raised very legitimately by the minister, and I am sure, by the rest of her department.

When she talks about the women's perspective into the government's ongoing strategy, I would suggest that the women's perspective in the ongoing strategy of this government has been sorely lacking. It is not being seen to the extent that it needs to be seen, and I think that I am coming full circle to my opening remarks.

While I would like to get into much greater detail on many of these issues, there are many other Estimates that need to come before this House, and there are other opportunities for us to discuss these issues. So, with that general kind of comment, that I think this department has an enormously important linkage and educational and influential role to play in this government, that the minister—I strongly urge her to figure out a way to break into that economic strategy, whatever that might be, and make even more serious inroads into the decisions that are made by this government which do not appear to, in

many instances, reflect the needs of the women in this province.

I say many instances, because there have been some initiatives that have been very positive, some in Family Services and some particularly in Justice. I would not want to take away from those initiatives, but they are also the kinds of initiatives that deal with one side of the continuum and do not yet address the basic causes. They deal more with the symptoms and less with the causes. The challenge is enormous and needs the assistance and full support of all members of the government and of the Legislature to implement. I wish the minister well, because she has got, obviously, an enormous job ahead of her. Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Madam Chairperson, and I think we all recognize as women that women have a long way to go, and we have a lot of work to do. I know that we have been in government just over four years and, in fact, a lot of the problems that exist within the system are problems that have been there for many, many years. They did not just happen in the last four years that we have been government, and I think what any government has to do is set their priorities within the fiscal reality of what the taxpayers of the province they represent can afford. There are many, many issues that need to be dealt with and, you know, require a lot more infusion of dollars, scarce dollars I might say, in these days of very tough economic times. We have made a decision as a government that we are not going to raise taxes and provide any more hardship in that way on the people of Manitoba than already presently exists.

A lot of the taxation that exists today, of course, is due to the policies of prior governments when they spent more than they earned year after year, and we had a terribly high debt load that we were faced with when we came into government. Then, of course, with recessionary times, that has just added—when there are no new tax dollars coming in, it is pretty difficult to increase programs anywhere.

We all do know that Health and Education and Family Services have been the priorities of this government over the last five budgets. We have made some progress. I know there is still a long way to go, that we have not been able to address every issue and every concern that is out there, but we have made, as the member for Wellington—I get Wellington and Wolseley mixed up at times—has

indicated, that there have been some positive things happen.

I think the one area that we can boast major accomplishments in is on the domestic violence side of things, when we have over the last four years gone from three wife abuse shelters to 11 shelters. We have increased our funding substantially, 193 percent, \$2.5 million over the last five budgets. Just this year alone we have had an increase of \$500,000 to the shelter system, which, as I indicated in my opening statements, was a 10.4 percent increase. I think the increase went into the right places to do a lot of the right things.

* (2210)

The things that we did this year with the increase in funding were things that were recommended to us by the shelters and the shelter system. They have gone into counselling programs for children in all the shelters. The money has gone to follow-up workers at all of the shelters to provide services to women who re-enter the community after a shelter stay. The length of stay in shelters has increased from 10 days to 21 days, and I think that was a major accomplishment and a major step in the right direction.

We also provided with that money an increase in support to Klinic's Evolve program for counselling of abusers. I think we all know that there are some major undertakings that still need to be done in the area of counselling for abusers. But our first priority, of course, had to be to provide a safe place for those women and children who have to be removed from a very volatile situation. We also did, with that extra \$500,000, provide additional support for long-term counselling to the North End Women's Centre, the Women's Post Treatment Centre and the Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre, and I know that all of these organizations are very supportive of the new initiatives and, of course, the increased funding.

We have some new shelter facilities that we will be opening this year in Portage la Prairie and in Dauphin. There is one on track and scheduled for approval next year in Selkirk—[interjection] I know the member for Selkirk is here and I would hope that he would applaud this government when the time comes for that very positive initiative in his home constituency.

We also have just constructed a new facility for the Native Women's Transition Centre and were pleased to have been part of that initiative in

partnership with the community and also with the federal government.

Another area that we have made some major advances in is the area of justice, and I have to commend my colleague for his very responsible attitude in the area of violence against women. We did commission the Pedlar report of which many of the recommendations are underway or have been implemented already. Of course, there is new legislation that has been introduced into the House, too, that will provide quicker access to restraining orders for women without having to go through the hoops that are in place presently.

As a result of the Pedlar report and our government's commitment to dealing with abuse, we are now directing police to lay charges in all cases of partner abuse where evidence does exist. There is mandatory prosecution of all partner-abuse offences wherever evidence exists. As I said, now women will have quicker access to restraining orders. There are stiffer penalties for breaching restraining orders, and we are developing standard policies throughout the justice system to ensure domestic violence is dealt with as a priority and in a consistent manner.

We have extended the Family Violence Court outside of Winnipeg to Brandon and established a community consultation committee to advise government on the implementation of the long-term recommendations from the Pedlar review. Of course, we are introducing legislation—Bill 64, I believe it is—to create a Child Advocate for the province of Manitoba.

In those two areas we have made some major advances and, along with new programs and new initiatives, there is also a request for increased resources through funding. Ultimately, we know that it is the taxpayers of Manitoba who have to bear the burden of increased taxes. As I said earlier, we have made a commitment as a government that we are not going to, or we have not over the last five budgets, and as a matter of fact, we have decreased personal income taxes while trying to maintain the vital services that presently exist and enhance in the areas that I have just indicated, where we have put substantial amounts of money into the shelter system in the province of Manitoba.

We have increased funding to child care by \$19 million. You know, the total child care funding for the province of Manitoba is now over \$46 million. So there are areas where we have been able to

make substantial improvement. I do realize and recognize that there has to be a partnership, and maybe a more substantial partnership developed between the Ministers of Education and the Women's Directorate. We have made a brief start with the joint meeting of the Ministers of Education and the Ministers responsible for the Status of Women last year.

I do know that we have the commitment of our Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to work together in partnership. We will be doing that over the next period of time to try to ensure that some of the issues that have been discussed here tonight will be addressed. We will try to do them in a way that will ultimately benefit our young girls and our women that are going through the educational process and those that do require retraining to get back into the work force.

I do know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), in his Women's Health area, has got some very competent and qualified people working to try to deal with the issues. As a matter of fact, when I was talking about the community consultation process last year that we undertook last September, it was with the Women's Health Directorate in combination with the Women's Directorate, where we went out and met and listened to the people who raised the issues that I talked about a little bit earlier.

There are areas that need to be worked on. We all know that we have not reached true equality and that there is much that we, as a government, can do. I make a commitment as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women to work in the areas that we can work in to try to effect change, to hopefully accept some congratulations for some of the good things that have been done. I would hope, that as positive changes take place in the future, those in the opposition would provide their positive support for new initiatives that can make a difference for women in Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs: Yes, I have just two very brief questions. The first one has to do with Bill 70. It is presently before us. It will in fact eliminate any differential between social assistance payments; I think that is positive. What I do not think is very positive is the fact that the government will not give us any inkling as to what their formula is going to be. What it appears their formula would be will be to cut the benefits of 89.3 percent of all social assistance recipients in the province of Manitoba, the vast majority of which are women. It will come primarily

from their food budget which will lead to poor nutrition of women and their children.

Can the minister tell me what advice the Women's Directorate has given to the minister with regard to setting the rates that will be paid in social assistance benefits in the province of Manitoba after the passage of Bill 70?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we all recognize and realize that there is a need for some standardization in the social allowances throughout the province of Manitoba. That is exactly what Bill 70 is trying to do, provide a framework to regulate the rates for municipal social assistance. I do not agree, and I would hope that no member in this House would agree, that there should be unfairness or inequity from community to community throughout the province.

I think the intent of the bill very definitely is to ensure that all Manitobans do have equal access to social assistance no matter where they reside. That is a fairness issue. I think it is an issue that I would be very surprised if anyone in this Legislature would submit to unfairness in the system. I know that the Department of Family Services is presently consulting with UMM and MAUM, the two municipal organizations that represent all communities throughout the province, and there has been no determination yet on what the levels will be. That will be a process of consultation.

I think we are a government that has committed to broad consultation throughout the community, and we will continue to do that. I cannot with any confidence give an indication of exactly what that rate will be.

* (2220)

Mrs. Carstairs: I can only assume that the Women's Directorate has not made a recommendation with regard to the impact on women of reducing their social assistance benefits. So let me try it with one other aspect the minister addressed in Expected Results: Representation of women's concerns on working committees dealing with the implementation of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

One of those women's concerns have to do with children. It was very clear throughout the AJI that women expressed over and over again their concerns for their children and the quality of life of their children within aboriginal society in Manitoba.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry went on further to recommend the independence of a Child Advocate Office, not one that would report to a ministry, but reporting directly to this Legislative Assembly. What position has the Women's Directorate taken with regard to representing these women's views to the minister responsible for Bill 64, which deals with the Child Advocate and does exactly opposite to what the AJI recommended, it makes it responsible to the minister and not to this Legislative Assembly?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I have expressed in this Legislature and committee on several occasions my sense of commitment to aboriginal women and aboriginal communities throughout our province of Manitoba.

I guess, without wanting to sound repetitive, I would like to express again sort of the sense of frustration I felt as a result of meeting with aboriginal women in some of the more remote communities up around The Pas, specifically Moose Lake, the women I had the opportunity to listen to and hear their stories first hand, and very unselfish women, women that in fact had a great sense of caring and commitment to their families and to their children, and to their communities. But first and foremost came their children that they felt had grown up through abusive years where they were abused at a very young age. In fact, the only way as teenagers that they could deal with their frustration and their anger was to strike out physically, and they were fighting and actually in many instances ended up killing each other as a result of not being able to deal with their emotions based on the treatment they had received through their formative years.

The women came and indicated that enough was enough, that they could not stand to see their children abused any longer. They could not stand to see what was going on in their communities as a result of the acts of violence.

Madam Chairperson, I was deeply moved and deeply affected listening to those women speak and tell me and reach out for assistance and for help from our government. You know, I left feeling extremely frustrated and very angry, thinking that right here in our Manitoba communities these kinds of things were happening and we were the ones that were very isolated from what was happening in those small remote communities. I left that meeting vowing to attempt to help and to make a difference, and I know that all of my colleagues that travelled

with me throughout the North for the next two days heard the same story I heard.

I was extremely angry and came back and as a result of that had women from the North, aboriginal women, come and meet with our caucus and make presentation to them, the women from Moose Lake being among those. They were asking for assistance, assistance to hold a conference, a healing circle, for their community, and we provided that assistance, Madam Chairperson, with financial support and also resources. Staff went up to participate and help out with that conference. One thing I was pleased to see was a new young male chief who was present and took part in the whole conference. I had an opportunity when I was up there to talk to him briefly, and he indicated that he was willing to work and to help to try to make a difference.

We do know that one healing conference on one weekend is not going to resolve all of the problems that do exist, but, Madam Chairperson, we have made a commitment, and I have made a personal commitment, to work with aboriginal women, and especially those who are in remote communities who feel extremely isolated and feel that they have nowhere to turn and nowhere to go for help.

We do recognize also that there is a federal responsibility to support for our aboriginal people. I made a commitment just the other day to work with the Indigenous Women's Collective and try to put together a presentation where both of us could approach the federal government and try to work in partnership to help aboriginal women access the resources that could and should be available through the federal government to deal with some of the issues and concerns that they raise and that they face on a day-to-day basis.

Madam Chairperson, I believe that the legislation, Bill 64, that has been introduced, that sets up a Child Advocate is, in fact, modelled after what is successfully working in other provinces. I am not sure how many other provinces have the system in place. I know there are a couple that have found that this legislation works. I think, in the best interests of the children that this legislation will serve, that we need to get it expeditiously passed and through the Legislature and get a Child Advocate in place.

Madam Chairperson: Item 1. Status of Women (a) Advisory Council on the Status of Women: (1)

Salaries \$162,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$116,500—pass.

1.(b) Women's Directorate: (1) Salaries \$529,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$92,500—pass.

Resolution 123: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$900,900 for Status of Women, Status of Women, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

This concludes the Estimates for the Status of Women. The hour being after 10 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being after 10 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday)

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Monday, June 8, 1992

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