



Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

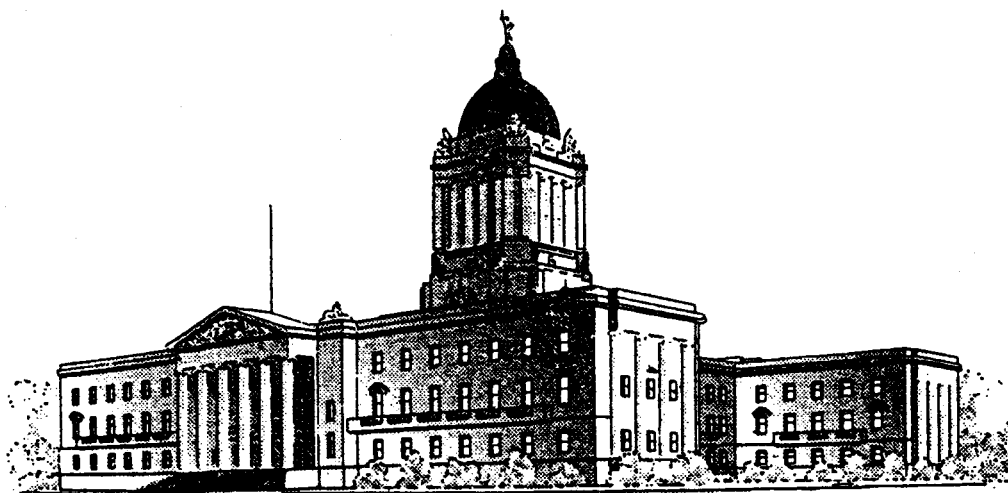
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 21, 1994

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): Mr. Speaker, I will have two separate reports from the Committee of Supply.

First, Mr. Speaker, in the section of the Committee of Supply sitting in Room 255 of the Legislative Building on June 20, considering the Estimates of the Status of Women, an alleged matter of privilege was raised by the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). The following motion moved by the honourable member for Radisson was adopted on a formal vote of the entire committee:

THAT the comments of the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Orchard), of Monday, June 13, to myself in the Committee of Supply indicating "she needs a slap" that violated my privileges as a member of the Legislature be reported to the House and that, in accordance with the provisions of Beauchesne Citation 107, this committee recommend that this matter be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Speaker: I believe a few words about process would be helpful to all members at this point.

In this particular case, the report from the Committee of Supply respecting the alleged matter of privilege takes the place of the more usual raising of the matter in the House by an honourable member. No motion that the report be received is required in this case, just as a report respecting grave disorder in a Committee of the Whole House does not require a motion that it be received.

The Chair believes that the matter has already been the subject of considerable debate and has therefore taken it under advisement at this time.

Mrs. Dacquay: Secondly, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions and directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

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

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Southwood School seventy-five Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Rick Goerzen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger).

Also, from the Ramah Hebrew School, we have forty-five Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Pat LeClair and Mrs. Alta Sigesmund. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Bell-Wade Report Release

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, one of the major problems with the government's so-called health care reform is the government has not included the public, patients and nurses in the process. The government brought in their \$4-million consultant, and that whole process was a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the government has now commissioned 96 study groups to deal with health care, with very little public representation on those committees. The government is also keeping from the public a number of reports that have been commissioned at great taxpayer expense, such as the Emergency Task Force report. We know the government has spent \$230,000, a quarter of a million dollars, on the so-called Bell-Wade Report which makes sweeping recommendations about the reorganization of St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre.

My question to the minister today is, why is the minister refusing to make public this Bell-Wade Report that has significant bearing on so much that is happening in our health care field and costs the taxpayers of this province one-quarter of a million dollars?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, most of what the honourable member has said is wrong. The Bell-Wade Report will be made public at an appropriate time when the partners in the project are in a state of readiness to release the report.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the management at Health Sciences Centre has just been restructured. The management at St. Boniface Hospital has been restructured. Bell-Wade recommends another governance model, another structure be put in place between Health Sciences and St. Boniface.

Why will the minister not make public a quarter of a million dollar report that has a significant bearing on health care in this province? What is he afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: The only thing that frightens me, Mr. Speaker, is misinformation. The true information does not frighten me because the true information tells me that we will build a sustainable health care system that will last us for many generations. What the honourable member offers is the death of the health care system.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the minister is engaging in that kind of debate.

Will the minister advise this House how long he has had the report? Will he tell us why he is refusing to make this report public? Why is he

refusing to make public the recommendations about the restructuring of those facilities, the reallocation of different surgeries from one hospital to another, the recommendation that perhaps St. Boniface Hospital might be downsized while surgery moves to Health Sciences Centre?

Why is the minister not dealing with this report? Why will he not make it public and allow the public which pays these bills to have access to it, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, the public pays the bills, and the public is the group we are working for here in the government, and it is the public who will benefit from changes that take place as a result of the Bell-Wade experience.

Mr. Speaker, I am not refusing to make that report public. It will be made public at the appropriate time.

* (1340)

Burns Committee Conflict of Interest

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, there is continuing concern about the government's handling of the Winnipeg Jets situation in terms of deadlines and the status of the Burns committee and other matters, including the exposure of the taxpayers of the province in terms of potential losses.

My first question to the Premier is in terms of the situation with the Burns committee. James Burns, the head of the Burns committee, is also apparently, Mr. Speaker, the head of a nonprofit corporation, Jets Private Sector Inc., which has been in operation for three years and may potentially be one of the options in terms of ownership of the team.

I would like to ask the Premier, first of all, if the Premier has assured himself that there is no conflict in the fact that Mr. Burns is also the chair of the Burns committee, with this particular arrangement, given the fact that the Private Sector Inc. could potentially be an owner of the Jets in and of itself.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are engaging in exactly what the Leader of the

Opposition (Mr. Doer) said was not appropriate and was not productive, and that is speculation based on speculation. I would just suggest to the member for Thompson that he not try and create a political situation here for his advantage just simply for the purpose of stirring up.

There is no evidence whatsoever that there is any situation of conflict. That was speculation based on speculation, and he has now tried to make political fodder of it, and I suggest it is totally inappropriate.

Deadline

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking questions on behalf of a million people in the province of Manitoba, and I will ask a further question because there is continuing confusion. It is the Premier and this government who signed the agreement that has exposed the taxpayers in this case. There is also confusion over the deadline.

In Estimates on May 2, the Premier indicated, and I quote: "there is not a good reason why you would want to extend that any length of time . . .", referring to the deadline. Apparently, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is now saying that the deadline of June 30 applies only to the option to purchase the Jets.

But, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the documents signed by the Premier, the letter of endorsement signed by the Premier, in fact, it states that, if by June 30, 1994, the interim steering committee and the majority ownership of the Jets Hockey Club have not reached an agreement for a long-term solution in a new facility or in the existing facility—in other words, tied into the question of the arena, that deadline applies in that particular case.

I want to ask the Premier, what is the situation? What is the deadline and where do the taxpayers of Manitoba stand in terms of the exposure of the Province of Manitoba with the Winnipeg Jets?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the only confusion is that this is being generated, fostered and perpetrated by the members opposite for their own political purposes. I recommend to them that, like everybody else, they wait for the

Burns report, and then they can operate on fact, which might be a novel opportunity for them.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I have asked questions on the situation of the Burns committee. I have asked questions in terms of the deadline. I would appreciate an answer on at least one of those two questions.

What is the situation currently in terms of the deadline? Which of the statements of the Premier now apply—the May 2 statement, the statements yesterday, the document the Premier signed, the letter of endorsement? What is the situation in terms of the deadline, in terms of both the ownership of the team and the Winnipeg Arena, and where do we stand in the province of Manitoba as taxpayers in terms of any exposure as a result of the agreement signed by this Premier?

Mr. Filmon: The situation remains that the only exposure that the taxpayers have is exceeded, in fact, by double in terms of direct revenues to the three levels of government.

Whatever exposure is contained within that agreement, the people of Manitoba, in the form of direct taxation to all three levels of government, get more than twice as much back, Mr. Speaker. That is the prevailing situation.

Winnipeg Jets Future Status

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier was very forthright and frank that he did not favour the government exercising the option to purchase the remaining majority shares of the Winnipeg Jets for \$32 million. He also indicated that, to his knowledge, there were not other people wanting the benefit of that option.

Mr. Speaker, my question today for the First Minister: I think the worst-case scenario under this arrangement would be that Mr. Shenkarow is out trying to sell the team somewhere else, to someone else, and the taxpayers are still on the hook potentially until 1997 covering all the losses. What we know from experience is that when teams are

going to leave, oftentimes sales and attendance go down, so the losses, one would assume, may go up.

My question for the First Minister: Can he shed light on Mr. Shenkarow's current plans? Is, in fact, Mr. Shenkarow going to do that immediately, in which case we can all stop pursuing other people who might be interested in investing? Is he going to do that as of the June 30 deadline? One might assume from his recent change of mind that he is going to hold to that deadline.

What current information does the Premier have about the intentions of the majority owners, if any?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have not spoken to Mr. Shenkarow lately. That is a question that would have to be asked of him.

* (1345)

Investment Inquiries

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, secondly, for the First Minister, has the province, outside of the Burns committee—and, of course, this is being handled, I recognize, primarily out of the Industry, Trade and Tourism department.

Have there been any efforts made or any contacts that have come in from other investors, local investors who might want the benefit of that \$32-million option? Has that been pursued by the government? Have any specific increases been made by local investors in that regard?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): When such inquiries have come to us, we have referred them to the Burns committee, Mr. Speaker.

Burns Committee Report Tabling Request

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, for the last week or so, I have been asking, as all members have, when this report might come down. We now know about the June 30 deadline. Yesterday, the First Minister indicated that it would be not only prior to the end of the session, but that it would be prior to the June 30 deadline.

Can the minister indicate what his current knowledge is as to when we might have that report,

because I think a lot of things flow from that in terms of what public debate we might have and what options we might have. Can the minister, today, tell us when we are finally going to get that report?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Soon, Mr. Speaker.

Goods and Services Tax Impact on Employment

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

Manitobans are becoming angry and frustrated at the failure of the federal Liberal government to live up to its campaign promise to abolish the GST. Manitobans do not want a change of name of a regressive tax or a change that will be an even greater burden on consumers. I note economists have estimated that Ontario could lose as many as 74,000 jobs by 1997 if a value-added tax is implemented and harmonized with the provincial sales tax in that province, since it will transfer the burden more from business to consumers, resulting in lower sales and fewer jobs.

My question to the Minister of Finance is, has the minister any estimate of potential job losses in Manitoba that would occur from these proposals?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the number being quoted from Ontario is from a report that I believe is as yet unpublished by the Ontario Fair Tax Commission, and we are anxiously awaiting a copy of that report to see the basis of their evaluation.

We have looked at the kinds of assumptions that are being put forward as it relates to impact on jobs, and we share the concern that there will, particularly in the short term, be a negative impact on jobs because any pressure on consumer costs obviously affects consumer spending, which can affect our overall economic growth and our economy, not only in Manitoba but right across Canada.

The principle of an impact in the short term on jobs is one that appears to be certainly legitimate.

The actual quantification is something I do not have a number for as of yet, Mr. Speaker.

Food/Prescription Drugs

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the report of the committee has come out, so I would ask the minister if he has now received an analysis from his staff of the impact of the proposed extension of the tax. This is one of the proposals of the tax, to food and prescription drugs. In other words, can the minister advise how much more the average Manitoban will pay, or how much will the average Manitoba family pay if this extension of the federal sales tax occurs?

The Leader of the official opposition yesterday mentioned our estimate of \$170 million or \$680 per family, even at the 5.3 percent lower rate, so I wonder if the minister can comment on that today.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that certainly is something we will be quantifying. To date, the detailed text is being couriered to us. We have not received it. We have the press release and some summary documents.

We are very concerned about that issue. Not only is there the direct impact of extending it to food and prescription drugs, but there is some concern around the whole exemption level for municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals which can drive cost to governments. There are concerns about impact on people who derive other benefits from government, whether it is our Pharmacare programs, our social welfare programs and so on.

So there are many aspects of potential cost to consumers and governments as a result of some of the potential changes being recommended for this renamed GST.

* (1350)

Elimination

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I thank the minister for that information, Mr. Speaker.

There will be a meeting of Finance ministers in a matter of a few weeks or a few days, and I wonder if the minister is prepared to advocate at that meeting, at which many tax issues will be

discussed, whether he is prepared to advocate the total scrapping of the GST or the VAT or any kind of national sales tax, as was promised by the federal Liberals during the last election and as Canadians and Manitobans want. They want that tax scrapped.

Will this minister go to Vancouver or wherever this meeting is held and urge that any revenue loss be replaced with fairer tax measures such as repealing business tax loopholes or taxing family trusts, that is, to bring a measure of progressivity to our tax system?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as in reply to the first question, I believe this report from the committee addresses some 20 alternatives, I think. We will be doing a detailed analysis of the entire report and will be doing an analysis of the impact on Manitobans.

Obviously, we are very concerned about the impact on Manitobans. We have taken the position so far that we oppose harmonization. We opposed harmonization when the GST was introduced, and, really, all we have before us today with the information we have been provided is the GST with a new name, plain and simple, with the discussion now revolving around harmonization and expanding provincial sales taxes into books, children's clothing, service industries and potentially expanding into food and prescription drugs and medical supplies.

We have opposed that in the past. We continue to oppose that, because we see no good and valid reason to support that. We will be looking for all alternatives to find what we think is a fair and equitable solution for taxpayers in Manitoba, and we are certainly more than willing to share whatever information we put in place as we proceed with what is going to be a very challenging issue.

Illegal Grain Exports Impact on Canadian Wheat Board

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, we are aware that even though the Canadian Wheat Board has a monopoly on exports of western Canadian wheat and barley, there is an

increasing amount, in fact thousands of tonnes of grain being exported illegally into the United States. This is an undermining of the Canadian Wheat Board, which is a very important institute for western grain farmers.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether his department is monitoring this situation as to the impacts on Manitoba farmers and whether he has communicated with the federal government on the importance of maintaining the Wheat Board or, in fact, if possible, strengthening the Wheat Board's monopoly.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member will acknowledge, I am sure, that this is largely the jurisdiction of the federal government and its agencies, the Wheat Board. It does, however, perhaps offer some indication to us that individual farmers are making every effort to move grain into market where perhaps failure of the system, that is the institutionalized system, has been unable to do so.

I do not have to call to the honourable member's attention that we had a very serious situation this last harvest year, where we had a great deal of grain that the Wheat Board initially was unable to place a price tag on. So I have some difficulty in faulting individual farmers who have sought to market this grain on their own initiative.

However, the member is right. There are regulations in place, and I am aware, the department is aware, that the issue is being taken seriously by the responsible officials, and it is currently being monitored.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the minister is condoning this illegal action.

I want to ask the minister if he will not agree that we cannot afford to have the reputation of the Canadian western grain farmers put at risk by farmers who are passing the Wheat Board, selling feed wheat as seed wheat, who are selling different varieties of barley as malting barley and ruining the reputation of Canadian grain producers. This cannot carry on.

Will he agree that this illegal action has to stop?

Mr. Enns: I suppose I am wondering which court on what occasion has decided that something illegal has happened. We are not dealing with O.J. Simpson here or something else.

I am prepared to let the responsible jurisdictions, namely the Canadian Wheat Board, Canadian Grain Commission and the RCMP, pursue the investigations that they are currently pursuing.

* (1355)

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, as far as I know, any wheat that is not sold through the Wheat Board—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, since our reputation as grain producers and exporters is based on our quality and quantity and our honesty, and since our reputation is being ruined by people who are selling grain illegally into the United States and bypassing the Wheat Board and not following standards, destroying our reputation, will the minister take a strong stand and defend the Wheat Board and support them in their attempts to have these illegal actions ended?

We cannot afford to have the Wheat Board's—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, I know it is in the interests of not just the grain farmers involved, but indeed of all Manitobans that every opportunity be examined and taken advantage of for the movement of the grain, what helps our economy, period, and to that extent, I will transmit this concern to the Wheat Board and to the grain farmers involved.

Maintenance Enforcement Backlog

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

The family maintenance enforcement court is a critical tool for getting delinquent parents to pay support to their families. Currently, though, the court is backlogged to the extent that one must wait until well into the summer for a hearing.

Meanwhile, families go without. Families are exposed to eviction and are faced with poverty.

So my question to the minister is, how can she justify closing the court for sittings on July 14, July 28, August 18, August 25, August 29, and what will be the impact of these closures on the backlog?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member knows—and I am sure we will be discussing this when we get into Justice Estimates, I hope it will be today—exactly the plans we have in Maintenance Enforcement to deal with the workweek reduction. I think he will find there is a plan in place and that the hysteria he is attempting to incite will not be the result.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain to mothers like Maureen Nolin [phonetic] of Winnipeg and her family why after two weeks and six messages left, the maintenance office will not tell Ms. Nolin the outcome of her ex's maintenance enforcement hearing, and will the minister explain why her own office has failed to tell her what happened, as it promised to do by yesterday?

Mrs. Vodrey: I hear the other side calling, shame. I say shame also for bringing an individual's case in here. I have no idea I have permission to speak about that individual's case and do not intend to drag that individual's case into this Chamber.

However, Mr. Speaker, as I have said to the member before, if there is an issue where I can be of assistance or my office can assist, then please let me know. I am glad to look into the matter.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Ms. Nolin was promised an answer by Monday, Mr. Speaker, and single moms in Manitoba are so desperate that they want these issues addressed in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, given the worsening conditions in the family maintenance office, tell Manitobans where the government's legislation is, given that in the throne speech of this session, the government stated that it would be introducing further measures to compel delinquent

parents to honour their responsibilities? Where is that legislation, Mr. Speaker?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed, over several answers, exactly what this government has done in the area of family maintenance and exactly how our record stacks up across the country. In fact, we have a very good record, but it is not perfect, and we understand that. We continue to attempt to make changes and add to the developments of the family maintenance enforcement office.

I have explained in this Chamber before the increase in the number of staff, the \$50,000 put towards computers, the money put towards the automated voice so that individuals can phone up and find out the status of their maintenance account. We continue to work across Canada with other jurisdictions and with the federal government in the area of maintenance enforcement so that we can make sure we have the best amount of co-operation across the country.

I know we will have further opportunity to discuss this in Estimates. I look forward to it. The maintenance office in this province, I know, works very hard on behalf of Manitobans.

* (1400)

Gross Revenue Insurance Plan Continuation

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

My question to the minister is about the success of the GRIP program here in Manitoba, where the average payment in 1993 was approximately \$20,800 per farmer, while in Saskatchewan, it was only \$2,465 per farmer.

In light of the fact that there has been some discussion going on regarding the safety net programs in Manitoba, such as the GRIP program, can the minister give us and our farmers some assurance that the GRIP program will continue here in Manitoba for the foreseeable future?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Gimli for that question.

I think as much as, I believe, that is a news story emanating from Saskatchewan, it is a legitimate question that perhaps demonstrates better than anything else I can say this government's continued commitment to our farmers, just that plain and simple.

It is understood, I think, by all that we had extremely adverse harvest conditions last harvest year. Thanks to the program that was initiated by my colleague, the now-Minister of Transportation (Mr. Findlay), the program did precisely what it was designed to do, to support our farm economy, namely our cereal grain growers in their time of need.

Mr. Speaker, that answers better than I can the kind of ongoing commitment that this government has to the farmers of Manitoba.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I just have a supplementary to the same minister.

In light of the Saskatchewan government's lack of support for agriculture in that province and the loss of jobs in agriculture, and seeing as agriculture is such a major industry in Manitoba and a major employer in Manitoba, and also it is a major factor in the preservation of family farms, can the Minister of Agriculture give us some assurance that in the discussions of the new safety nets, the GRIP program will continue for many, many years? [interjection]

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, the honourable members of the official opposition may comment, but the fact of the matter is, Saskatchewan dropped the GRIP program and has no particular future to offer to their farmers in the coming crop year.

We in Manitoba have opted to continue the GRIP program, and that is the position that I will be taking to the ministerial conference the first week of July, that the GRIP program continue to be a major portion, a major plank in our safety net program for Manitoba farmers.

Child Support Tax Treatment Manitoba Position

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): My question is for the Minister of Finance.

On May 7, a group of custodial parents met in this building to share their experience with Manitoba's Maintenance Enforcement Program. We formed a working group to prepare our position on the taxation of child support payments for presentation next Monday to the Federal Task Group on Tax Treatment of Child Support.

My question for the Minister of Finance: Will the department or this government be making a presentation to the task group on Manitoba's position on the tax treatment of child support?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker, this is purely an issue of federal jurisdiction.

Ms. McCormick: My supplementary question then to the minister: Does Manitoba not have something to contribute to this debate, and is there nothing that Manitoba parents would benefit from its government's position on this matter?

Mr. Stefanson: There is a case, I believe, before the Supreme Court at this particular point in time. It is an issue that falls under federal jurisdiction, and they are dealing with the issue.

Maintenance Enforcement Government Initiatives

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): My final question for the Minister of Justice: Has Manitoba examined recent legislative initiatives in Alberta with respect to renewal of driver's licences and other provincially controlled licences and permits, and can she report to this House when and whether we can expect a similar get-tough approach to defaulters in Manitoba?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member raised this question in Estimates last night. It surprises me it is asked again today. It was answered in Estimates last evening. She asked particularly, was this considered by the advisory council, and the answer at that time was no, it is not by the advisory council.

I also understand that the Liberal opposition in Alberta is very strongly opposed to this, so I am very interested in the member's question today.

**Gasoline Pricing
Increase Justification**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

This morning, Esso and Shell stations across the city raised their pump prices of gasoline from 51.9 cents to 54.9 cents, a 3-cent increase per litre.

Mr. Speaker, given that the price of a barrel of oil has actually dropped over the past year, can the minister explain why these increases are occurring at this time?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): This matter came to my attention a couple of hours ago, that, in fact, one oil company had increased their price very substantially.

Mr. Speaker, that causes me, it causes our government some concern, and I have asked my staff to look into the matter to see what rationale was being used for that, and then we will see what further action is taken after that.

Mr. Maloway: Would the minister then take this opportunity to call in the presidents of these oil companies and have them give an explanation as to why these increases are occurring? Mr. Speaker, just turning it over to his department for monitoring purposes is not what we need at this time.

Mr. Ernst: As I indicated in the response to the member's first question, the matter is under investigation. I am not jumping to conclusions. I am not flying off the handle. We are going to investigate and find out what the facts are, and then we will act.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, on December 28, the minister indicated he was puzzled about gas price differences there, and he promised that he would get back to us. He was going to have a look at it and get back to us. Well, that was six months ago, and we keep hearing things from this government like this. We want action. We want action now.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, while the member did not ask a question the third time he stood, what I want to say, though, in response to his little outburst is that we are going to deal with facts.

This is not a simple issue of bash the oil companies or nationalize the oil companies, as members opposite would have happen from time to time. We will deal with the facts. Once the facts are known, then further action will be contemplated.

**Bingo Revenues
Decrease**

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, volunteer community charitable fundraising organizations provide the financial backing of many community projects. They raise funds by operating bingos and Nevada ticket sales. Monies are donated to many needy projects, such as hospital foundations, cancer research and treatment, assisting transplant patients, as well as funding a multitude of activities for young people, such as cubs, scouts and sports.

I have here with me today, Mr. Speaker, a copy of the quarterly report figures for the last four years for the Transcona Optimist organization. My question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries.

Can the Minister of Lotteries explain why after 20 successful years of operation, including the last three years, pre-Club Regent, Mr. Speaker, where bingo revenues averaged \$120,000 per year, why is the Transcona Optimist bingo revenue lucky to hit \$40,000 in revenue figures this year from a high of \$120,000 per year?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): Mr. Speaker, overall over the past year in the province of Manitoba, bingo revenues, pure bingo revenues, have increased about 6.2 percent. Notwithstanding the fact that bingo revenues have increased, the associated revenue from break-open tickets has decreased. The break-open ticket game, by and large, has reached maturity. It is on its decline.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell him exactly what has happened in the 20 intervening years the member referred to. In 1974 in this country, there were 35,000 registered charities. Today, in 1994, there are 70,000 registered charities. There is substantially increased competition. The Lotteries

Corporation makes no distinction. Anyone who meets the criteria applying for a bingo licence is entitled to a bingo licence. We do not restrict those licences.

So, with the doubling of nonprofit and charitable organizations in this country, many of them—most of them, as a matter of fact—seeking bingo opportunities, there is fierce competition for the bingo dollar out there, and that is the primary reason why that club is in the situation it is in.

* (1410)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, there has been no increase in the number of fundraising organizations within my community.

Can the Minister of Lotteries explain why, since June of 1993, all of the Transcona community volunteer fundraising organizations, organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, the Kinsmen, the Optimists, community clubs and others, have seen their bingo revenues drop anywhere from 25 to 66 percent?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I do not know the individual circumstances around each of these organizations nor if the facts the member alleges are accurate. I can tell you that there is significant increased competition with regard to bingos from charitable organizations right across the province. Some are doing better than others. Some are doing significantly better than they did in the past. Others are not doing as well.

There is significantly increased competition as a result of more and more licences being issued and as a result of competition for a limited amount of dollars with respect to bingo play, and it happens to impact on some organizations who may not market their product as well as others.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the quarterly report indicates that the drop in revenue has only occurred since Club Regent opened in June of 1993.

My final supplementary for the same minister is, what steps is this government prepared to take to assist the volunteer fundraising organizations, like the Transcona Optimists, who are on the verge of

closing their doors after 25 years of community service?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, the member alleges that the opening of Club Regent has had an impact on the bingo players in his community.

Not more than a mile away, the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation operated a similar facility for bingo for the last 25 years or 20 years on Nairn Avenue, about a mile or so, perhaps two miles, east of the present location of Club Regent.

Interestingly enough, also, Club Regent property was purchased in 1986 by that government. The members sitting opposite were the ones who purchased that site for future development of that particular facility.

Winnipeg School Division Funding

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg School Division, like many other school divisions in this province, has been particularly hard hit by the government's cutbacks in education. The Winnipeg No. 1 School Division has received a reduction in provincial funding over the last two years of \$8.5 million, which represents 7 percent of their budget, not the 4 percent or 4.5 percent that the government announced, but 7 percent over those two years.

Can the Acting Minister of Education tell this House the impact of the \$8.5-million cuts on the Winnipeg School Division over the last two years that have been imposed by this government?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Acting Minister of Education and Training): I am happy to take the details of that question as notice for the Minister of Education. That member knows it is the board which decides how the money is spent.

Special Needs Funding

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Well, this government is responsible for the impact of their cuts on school divisions throughout this province.

In light of the huge proportion of special needs students that are served in the Winnipeg School Division, I want to ask the Acting Minister of Education how her government can justify these

kinds of rollbacks in provincial funding to the pre-1990-91 funding levels in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in light of the disproportionate share of special needs students that are served in School Division No. 1.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Acting Minister of Education and Training): The member knows very well that this government has maintained a very strong commitment to special needs young people and that they have, as we have discussed at other times, certainly had that commitment maintained.

I will take the details of the question for the Minister of Education, but I think the member also should open his eyes and look at the changes across Canada, look at what is being required of school boards. Hard decisions are having to be made everywhere, Mr. Speaker.

Funding

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Deputy Premier.

I want to ask the Deputy Premier if he today can assure this House and the people of Manitoba that the 2 percent cap that was imposed on school divisions throughout this province, which restricted their ability to respond to the needs of students in their school divisions, will not be reimposed for the coming fiscal year in the province, so that school divisions, if they are not going to get support from this government, can ensure that they can provide those services through alternate funding methods.

Will this Deputy Premier now make that assurance to the House?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): The question is being asked of the government that removed all of the education taxes from farmland, Mr. Speaker, and we are pleased to have been able to do so.

As far as the question is concerned, I will take it as notice for the Minister of Education.

Spruce Woods Provincial Forest Prairie Habitat

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, tall grass, mid-grass and short grass prairie are all endangered habitats needing protection in Manitoba.

Unfortunately, there has been an incident where there were thousands of trees planted by children near the Spruce Woods Provincial Forest, west of Carberry, and I want to ask the Minister responsible for Natural Resources how this could occur? Why was the prairie habitat not protected, and why is this happening at the same time that the government has just issued its report on endangered spaces for Manitoba?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the House that I am very proud of the program we have basically established in the protection of the tall grass prairie wherever we have the opportunity.

I think every member is aware that we have had a concern about the decrease of this, and the program within my department has been very active. We have been buying up more land and protecting more of the tall grass prairie than we have at any given time in the history of this province. We are very active with that.

Related to the specific question that she raised on the tree planting, that area, I am getting a report on it and will report back.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

The Grey Nuns—150th Anniversary

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface would like to make a nonpolitical statement. Leave? [agreed]

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I rise with pleasure today to honour the Grey Nuns who arrived here 150 years ago.

À une heure du matin, le 21 juin 1844, après un voyage ardu de 59 jours, quatre canots accostent sur la berge de la rivière Rouge devant la

cathédrale de Saint-Boniface. Quatre Soeurs grises en débarquent et elles sont accueillies par M^{gr} Joseph-Norbert Provencher. Ce dernier voyait enfin la réalisation d'un rêve qu'il caressait depuis plusieurs années, soit d'avoir l'aide de religieuses pour aider à l'éducation des filles et des femmes de la Rivière-Rouge.

Ces quatre premières religieuses, les soeurs Valade, Lagrave, Coutlée et Lafrance, se mirent aussitôt à l'oeuvre et, malgré les épreuves, leur travail progressa.

Bien que l'enseignement ait été leur premier mandat, les soins prodigués aux malades prennent bientôt une large part de leurs travaux. En 1846, une épidémie fait ses ravages parmi la population de la Rivière-Rouge. Les Soeurs grises ferment alors les classes pour se dévouer au soin des malades et à l'assistance des mourants. Un rapport des dix premières années, soit de 1844 à 1854, enregistre 6000 visites aux malades faites par les Soeurs.

L'Hôpital général de Saint-Boniface est le fruit du dévouement de ces femmes de foi et de dévouement. Le plus ancien hôpital de l'Ouest canadien possède aujourd'hui une position enviable à l'échelle nationale.

Monsieur le président, aujourd'hui, nous reconnaissons et nous célébrons le 150^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de ces pionnières à la Rivière-Rouge. De modestes débuts leur oeuvre s'est répandue à travers l'Ouest et le Grand Nord canadien et elles ont acquis, par leur inlassable travail et leur persévérance, une renommée internationale. La population du Manitoba toute entière est fière de ces femmes de vision et de courage.

Les Soeurs grises ont été plus que des enseignantes et des gardes-malades. Elles possédaient les qualités pionnières de courage, de foi et d'espérance. Mais elles ont été particulièrement admirables pour leur dévouement et leur grand amour pour l'humanité. Les Soeurs grises sont une tradition enracinée profondément dans notre histoire et leur grandes réalisations ont contribué sans mesure à notre société.

Monsieur le président, en qualité de député de Saint-Boniface et fier descendant du peuple métis qui fut parmi les premiers à profiter du dévouement de ces braves religieuses, c'est pour moi un grand honneur de les saluer aujourd'hui et de les remercier. Bonne fête, bon 150^e aux Soeurs grises de Montréal. Merci beaucoup.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, at one o'clock in the morning on June 21, 1844, after an arduous voyage of 59 days, four canoes landed on the bank of the Red River before the St. Boniface Cathedral. Four Grey Nuns disembarked and were welcomed by Monseigneur Joseph Norbert Provencher, who was at last witnessing the fulfillment of a dream that he had cherished for several years, that of obtaining the assistance of nuns to assist in educating the girls and women of the Red River Settlement. These first four nuns, Sisters Valade, Lagrave, Coutlée and Lafrance undertook their tasks immediately, and in spite of the difficulties their work progressed.

Although education was their primary mandate, providing care to the sick soon became a major part of their work. In 1846, an epidemic ravaged the population of Red River. At that time the Grey Nuns closed their classrooms in order to devote themselves to tending the sick and caring for the dying. A report on the first 10 years from 1844 to 1854 records 6,000 visits made by the nuns to the sick.

St. Boniface General Hospital is the result of the dedication of these women of faith and devotion. This hospital, the oldest in western Canada, occupies an enviable position today at the national level.

Mr. Speaker, today we are recognizing and celebrating the 150th anniversary of the arrival of these pioneers in the Red River Settlement. From a modest beginning, their work spread across the Canadian west and the far north, and their tireless work and their perseverance have brought them international recognition. The entire population of Manitoba takes pride in these women of vision and courage.

The Grey Nuns were more than teachers and nurses. They possessed the pioneer virtues of courage, faith and hope, but they were especially admirable for their devotion and their great love for humanity. The Grey Nuns represent a tradition that is deeply rooted in our history, and their great achievements have contributed immeasurably to our society.

Mr. Speaker, as the member for St. Boniface and as a proud descendent of the Metis people who were among the first to benefit from the devotion of these courageous nuns, I am very honoured today to pay homage to them and to thank them. Happy 150th anniversary to the Grey Nuns of Montreal. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Health have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join with the honourable member for St. Boniface in calling attention to the 150th anniversary of the coming to Red River of the Grey Nuns under the leadership of Mother Youville at that time.

Certainly, the history of Manitoba is not told without telling of the history of the Grey Nuns and their service to the people of not only what was then Red River but what is now Manitoba and west and north.

The story of the Grey Nuns should be, I suggest, something that should be commended to every single person in western Canada because we can only be as proud of our country to the extent that we understand its history, and it is indeed rich when you consider that dimension of its history which has to do with the Grey Nuns and the totally selfless service to the communities in which they worked. In Manitoba they included Red River, but they were as far flung as Ste. Rose and off to northern Saskatchewan and into the Northwest Territories.

I think of Sister Lagrave—I believe I am pronouncing that right—who was really the originator of home care in this part of the world. I mean, we talk about home care today as if it is something new. Basically, government got

involved in the mid-'70s, but Sister Lagrave visited in the homes of people in those early days and can, in my view, be called the mother of home care in this part of the world.

I just simply wish to call attention to the richness of our society, thanks in no small measure to the contribution made by the Grey Nuns.

* (1420)

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. The honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) has filled in the historic value of the Grey Nuns to our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Grey Nuns not only were the founders of the health care system in our province, but they worked within the educational system within our province for many years. I remember the convent within St. Norbert where most of my sisters attended school. After we moved into the new school system, the Grey Nuns did move into the schools with us. I still remember Sister Ritchot and Soeur Gauthier, who I just happened to meet the other day at the consecration of la chapelle du Sacré-Coeur in St. Norbert. Even though she is five foot nothing and 79-years-old, she is still full of spirit, and she could still box my ears as she did back in Grade 1 in those days. I know that she told me that she was looking forward to meeting me this Saturday. I asked her if she and Sister Gauthier were there, if they could please not box my ears this time, I would appreciate it, but I did grow up to be a little bit taller. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Kildonan have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I, too, join with all members in the House in commemorating the Grey Nuns' 150 years of charitable, health, spiritual, educational, all-around community work undertaken by this order for the past 150 years. It certainly serves as a strong historical indication of co-operation in the spirit of faith in this province. I certainly join, and

our party joins with all members in commemorating this order and the work that they have undertaken.

I want to make a comment, Mr. Speaker. I met a hospital administrator at one time, and I was very impressed with his efficiency and very impressed with the way he handled himself. I said, you know, you are obviously well trained and well educated. He said, well, I would have to be, I was trained by the Grey Nuns.

So I join with all members of the House in commemorating this momentous occasion. Thank you.

Winnipeg General Strike—Veterans Parade

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Burrows have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave? [agreed]

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Seventy-five years ago today, on June 21, 1919, World War I veterans organized a silent parade to demand an explanation as to why the Winnipeg General Strike leaders had been arrested. They called it a silent parade in order to emphasize their agreement with the strikers' policy of nonviolence.

On the one hand, there were thousands of unarmed veterans, strikers and their supporters. On the other side were the North West Mounted Police on horseback, hundreds of special constables armed with clubs and revolvers and General Ketchen's mobile militia units with armoured car and machine guns mounted on trucks.

The mounted police made four charges through the parade and on the fourth charge fired into the crowd.

Mike Sokolowski was killed instantly near the intersection of William and Main. Steve Sherbanevich died of his gunshot wounds two days later, two days after Bloody Saturday. Dozens more were wounded by gunfire or were beaten by the vigilantes organized by the Citizens' Committee of 1000.

Several days later the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council brought the strike to an official end.

Some historians consider the General Strike a failure in that the immediate goals were not achieved. However, the strike leaders had a large impact, particularly in the political arena, and their names, A.A. Heaps, J.S. Woodsworth and R.B. Russell have been immortalized in the names of a museum, a school and civil service buildings.

By contrast, very few of the names of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand have ever been revealed, as if they were ashamed of the role they played in putting down the strike and on Bloody Saturday.

To mark the 75th Anniversary of Bloody Saturday, a wreath will be laid at the corner of William and Main Street at 2:30 p.m. today.

Commonwealth Servicewomen—Statue

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I would like to seek leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Health have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, if they drive down Memorial Boulevard, will see a statue of three women representing the army, the navy and the air force, and the contribution of Commonwealth women to the efforts of World War I and World War II.

This past weekend I had the pleasure on behalf of the government of Manitoba to receive for safekeeping from the Women's Tri-Service Association the statue for the government to look after in perpetuity.

I was pleased and proud to do so on behalf of all Manitobans, but I wanted to call attention to the efforts of Beryl Simpson and Margaret MacDonald [phonetic] in seeing to it that that statue was raised a number of years ago.

They fundraised so that that could happen. They secured the services of a sculptor for that and have taken a very great interest to ensure that all Manitobans and all Canadians are aware of the service made to the world by the women of the Commonwealth who took part in those services.

In that regard, not everybody realizes it, Mr. Speaker, but some 65 different kinds of endeavours were undertaken by the women of those services during those wars. I just wanted to call attention to that today to thank Beryl Simpson and Margaret MacDonald [phonetic], and to assure them, on behalf of all of the members here, that all governments present and future will do the best we can to ensure the safekeeping of that statue.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent for the sitting of Committee of Supply on Thursday morning of this week. Subrule 65.(9) would apply, that is, there will be no formal votes taken.

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed? Unanimous consent? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Would you again canvass the House, Mr. Speaker, to determine if there is unanimous consent for the conduct of Estimates today in Room 255, that is to say, the Estimates of Decentralization and, upon completion of Estimates of Decentralization, the Estimates of the Department of Government Services?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave—is it to bring forward the department of Decentralization? Yes. Okay. Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, it is Decentralization, and then on completion of Decentralization, we would deal with the Estimates of the Department of Government Services.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave, therefore, for altering the sequence so, upon completion of the Decentralization, that we would do Government Services? That is agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the departments of Decentralization and Government Services; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Justice.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

DECENTRALIZATION

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the department of Decentralization. Does the honourable minister of Decentralization have any opening statements?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Yes, I do, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson.

Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to present the budget Estimates for this government's Decentralization initiative, an initiative that gives Manitobans living in rural or remote areas the services they deserve and expect from their government.

This initiative is in the final stages of completing the original commitment to decentralize public sector positions to communities in rural Manitoba.

As of March 31, 1994, 642 positions representing more than 90 percent of the original commitment of 693 positions have been relocated to rural Manitoba.

The Decentralization committee, along with officials from government departments and Crown corporations, are continuing to pursue further positions and programs that qualify for Decentralization to fulfill the outstanding commitments.

The Decentralization initiative is a success in the 59 communities that have received public sector positions under the program but more importantly

to the Manitobans who rely on the services this government provides.

Decentralization proves that many government programs can be operated effectively and efficiently in rural and remote areas. It is our belief that a healthy rural economy is necessary for Manitoba to prosper. The Decentralization initiative gives Manitoba's rural economy a much needed stimulus with the transfer of people and their payroll dollars to local communities.

A number of significant benefits can be seen through Decentralization. Rural economies have been stimulated and strengthened. Program delivery is more efficient through the restructuring and reorganization of staff and expansion of computer technology and program relocations and consolidations. Government services in rural Manitoba are benefiting from increased input and are now more sensitive and responsive to local conditions and priorities.

Under the Decentralization initiative \$25 million in direct payroll has already been transferred to rural Manitoba. Even if only one-half of the net take-home pay is spent in rural Manitoba, the economic spin-offs would lever about \$3.5 million in additional service sector wages and create about 125 additional jobs in rural Manitoba.

The Decentralization initiative has created opportunities for builders and 3,300 weeks of work for local trades through the construction of \$8.7 million of new buildings. Tentative improvements to existing buildings amounting to \$3.8 million were also completed mainly using local trades.

Future jobs will be available to rural Manitobans through the normal turnover of staff in decentralization positions, giving the young adults living in rural communities the chance to live and work where they grew up.

I would like to mention an aspect this program offers you will not find on any balance sheet that is concerned with only numbers. Of all the positions that have been decentralized, 299 government employees chose to go with their jobs outside of Winnipeg. This could represent 299 families that

become part of a community, volunteer in a local organization, meet new friends, possibly being reunited or closer with family, meanwhile reaping the blessings of rural living. While they are becoming valued additions to their own new city, town or village they are likely doing their job better just by being there.

Now Manitobans can walk into their office and talk to a person who will help them instead of waiting for their telephone call to be returned.

The Decentralization initiative makes a lot of sense to our government, but it makes much more sense to the Manitobans receiving their services right in their own home communities. The \$100,000 requested for Appropriation 27.4 for the 1994-95 fiscal year should cover the expenses necessary to complete the original commitment for Decentralization.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): I thank the minister of Decentralization for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for the Interlake have any opening comments?

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Yes, indeed, the Decentralization program, as the minister has indicated, is almost at the end of its mandate to take people out into the rural area and vitalize the economy in certain rural areas. As I had made mention, I looked over my comments from committee Estimates last year, and we had indicated to the minister and I will indicate again that perhaps decentralization is something that we should be looking at even more and perhaps somehow developing it further so that the jobs that are yet to be fulfilled, we can expand on that.

The minister has indicated that in some of the communities that have received decentralized jobs, it has vitalized and helped their areas, but there are a lot of other communities that have lost some jobs either through decentralization or centralization. Others have lost some positions through attrition and through other causes. So I would think, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that the minister might perhaps want to look with his staff and the Crown corporations and the other

government services to in fact see if there are communities—and they are of course listed by jobs in the areas that have received decentralized jobs. I think that perhaps we could expand on that.

I think that we should not stop at 693 positions, as is indicated in Decentralization. I think there is room out there and positions in communities that will, in fact, do well with some more jobs in certain departments. I can name Natural Resources for one, Environment for another, Housing for another, Highways and Transportation. In rural communities, those are some of the important departments that we have that are related to rural Manitoba, and I feel that perhaps we should really seriously look at making that number 793, for an example.

So I think that if the minister feels that the Decentralization program was such a success, then perhaps we could start looking at some of the have-not communities, some of the communities that are in need of extra positions that did receive some positions. Perhaps there are not enough in that area for that certain department or that certain area.

So I would think, and I would want to say and put on record, that I feel there are communities out there in rural Manitoba that could use more positions, that could use positions in certain government services that are vital to their area and, yes, stimulate the local economy. We should not centralize the decentralization of the positions just in specific areas.

* (1440)

A comment made to me today, just today, is that there would be a great, great need and there is a great need for environmental people to be in the central and north Interlake area. It came up rather as a shock to me that the thought out there in the communities is there, and that was not from a local politician. It was just from someone who called me today to express his views on certain other items.

So again, if we want to say that decentralization is a success, I would say let us make it a success to the communities that we should be looking at that could use the extra positions, could use the economic benefit. Even if some of the

communities have received one or two positions, let us start looking at whether those positions in those communities could not, well in fact, get other government services in departments out in their areas that may be vital to the area and improve the local economy even more.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): Thank you. We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Does the critic from the second opposition, the honourable member for Crescentwood, have any opening comments?

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I thank the minister for his opening comments in regard to Decentralization.

When this program was first announced by this government a number of years ago, although the concept of decentralization of government services was appropriate, we certainly did not have a problem with and do not have a problem with as a Liberal caucus.

Some of our concerns centered around some of the programs that were suggested for decentralization, such as Vital Statistics, as an example. Some of the other programs and services, such as the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, which I think was to be decentralized to Brandon, it certainly made some sense, and we supported those kinds of initiatives.

I want to keep my opening comments brief because I am interested in getting into the question areas and having an opportunity to follow up on some of the minister's statements in his opening remarks.

He talks about evaluation and balance sheets and the success of decentralization, so I will be interested in hearing a bit more detail in regard to how does one determine the success and really asking for some evaluation of the programs.

With that, I would like to leave the comments short and look forward to a healthy discussion and debate about, not only the decentralized program as we have seen it to date, but any future plans that this government has in regard to a further decentralization of government services.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): I thank the opposition critic for those remarks.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and when they have joined us, we will ask the minister to introduce his staff.

We will be on page 151 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I have with me this afternoon Deputy Minister Winston Hodgins, also Robin Hall, from the Decentralization unit, and also Mr. Barry Thomson who has joined our staff in completing the decentralization initiative and the preparation of the audit of the annual report.

Ms. Gray: I am wondering if the minister could begin by telling us—he referred to some successes of the program in regard to the efficient program delivery and stimulation of local economy. I am wondering if the minister has an evaluation or any written evaluation in terms of the evidence that has showed the positive value of the decentralization program in the rural communities.

Mr. Derkach: There are actually two areas in the two documents that the member may have, one in the annual report. If you go, if you were to turn to Appendix A—do you have a copy of that? This is a summary of comments from various program managers with respect to relocations under the Decentralization initiative. Basically, it talks about some of the observations as they have been seen by the various program managers, and it goes through just a few examples, using Winkler, Brandon, Carberry, Brandon again, Carman and Russell. Then if we turn in the Supplementary Information to page 12, basically a summary of economic benefits in rural Manitoba which I guess summarizes some of the things that I referred to in my comments.

On page 13 of the annual report there is an expansion of the summary I referred to in the Supplementary Information of economic benefits as they have been reviewed and summarized.

I can go through each of those, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, but in general what we have found from visiting the Decentralization initiatives throughout rural Manitoba are several things: One, first of all, that there is an economic benefit to the

community. That does not have to be restated, but I do believe that no matter which community you visit, you will find that there is indeed an economic benefit to the community by having, first of all, government positions there, the presence of government in a community and also that service that can be accessed by the local area.

The next benefit, of course, is to the jobs that have been created in those areas, whether they are jobs that have been moved from the city of Winnipeg or Brandon, or whether they are jobs that have been added or new jobs for members in the community, there certainly has been a benefit in terms of the economy in that respect.

Another benefit, I think is—from the anecdotes that we have received from various departments—it is obvious that some of the units are operating with fewer staff than they had when they were in the city of Winnipeg and are doing probably expanded work. I refer to two specific ones, one in Winkler and the one in the community of Russell, where we have actually decreased or not expanded the number of staff, but the functions that are being performed in many cases have been expanded. Those are just, by example, some of the benefits that we see.

I could go to Dauphin and tell you that the Decentralization initiative that went to Dauphin from Education, being the Native Education branch has proven to be extremely successful in that the staff there are closer to their clients, and also it seems that we can address issues much more adequately because there is a closer working relationship with the clients of that particular branch.

* (1450)

I have personally talked to many people who have been decentralized to various offices and my first question to them is, how do you like living in rural Manitoba? I can tell you that I have not heard any negative comments about living in rural Manitoba. I do know of one case where a single parent did come back to the city when her children moved on to university so she could be closer to a university setting. I know of another one who asked for a transfer back to Winnipeg because her

husband got permanent employment in the city and they were expecting a family so they wanted to be together. We tried to accommodate that as best we could. Basically, there is a very good attitude about rural Manitoba.

In addition, I believe there was a survey done with respect to civil servants who might want to move to Manitoba, and it is my understanding that in excess of 200 respondents were very positive about moving to a rural setting.

Ms. Gray: The minister has referenced two examples in Winkler and Russell where the organization is able to operate with less staff. Can the minister tell us why? I am asking that question because is it related to improved technology within the department or does it have something to do with Winkler or Russell?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I think there are several things that happen. When you move an office, when you move a complete unit like that, it gives any department the opportunity to perhaps reorganize an office in the way it is run. It also gave an opportunity for those offices to upgrade their technology. I think that is a very major factor.

The other thing—I think it is not quantifiable but certainly is there—is that when you have people from a local area working in an office I think there is a desire to make it successful. I know from some of the comments that have been made to me, the work ethic has certainly been excellent in rural Manitoba, not that it was poor in Winnipeg, but I think there was a desire to make the initiative a success in those local communities. I think that has added to how those offices are functioning.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, this may be in the annual report or the Estimates, but does the minister have the numbers as to—he has indicated how many positions. I think there is an indication of how many staff have actually been decentralized to rural Manitoba. In terms of overall government staff years, is there a net increase or a net decrease to positions outside of the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that is a question I cannot answer specifically. We

do not have those numbers right now in terms of net gain or loss. I am confident it is a net gain, but if you ask me how many, I could not answer that question. We would have to go back to all of the departments and see which positions were cut from their budgets, where they were located, and then we would have to do the same with the Crown corporations. We do not have that information.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I thought that the minister might have had that information, being part of cabinet, that there might have been some total figures or numbers in terms of with some of the changes and reductions in staff years what the impact was on rural Manitoba with that.

I would also ask the minister, the Vital Statistics branch or section, there was some discussion about whether that should be moved or not. I think it is still in the city of Winnipeg. Can the minister give us an update? Was there a final decision made on that operation staying in Winnipeg, and what were the reasons for that?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, there has been a decision made on Vital Statistics. Vital Statistics will not be relocating. They have been moved to a Special Operating Agency status, and also the Vital Statistics branch itself has moved to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. At this time I would say that the branch or the Special Operating Agency will stay in Winnipeg.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am not sure of how many phases we have gone through with Decentralization—one phase. Is there a future phase in regard to looking at the various departments and sections and branches and looking at potential further Decentralization initiatives? I ask that given that even a few years later I would hope or think that our technology at the workplace has even improved over the last couple of years within the departments, and that, in fact, there may be potentials for other services and programs, or not even necessarily direct services, but other branches that provide planning and evaluation of which they are scattered throughout

the 25 or 26 departments. Is there any plan to look at a Phase II?

Mr. Derkach: Rather than a Phase II, I think what we want to do as a government is fulfill our obligations as we enunciated them back in 1990 and then continue the process of examining departments on a continuing basis, and finding sections of departments or branches of departments or units within departments that can effectively be decentralized to rural communities.

Also, I believe that we need to look at how we can reorganize some of our departments so that we can become much more efficient, and in doing that sometimes it allows us the opportunity to decentralize units as well.

So it is not going to be necessarily what you might term another phase or a stage, rather an ongoing process that would be undertaken, and a commitment made to ensure that we actively find positions for rural communities where we can.

Basically that is where we are at right now. As a matter of fact, in completing the Decentralization initiative, we are examining departments and finding where it makes sense to decentralize. It does not necessarily have to be out of the city of Winnipeg. It could be out of the city of Brandon, for that matter, to local communities where it makes some sense.

In that way, I know there was a question in the House about positions being decentralized to Birtle, which as Decentralization minister I was not even aware that that move had already been made, because that is just part of a department's reorganization, and perhaps trying to serve a particular area better.

Now, we are involved in decentralization in that we work with departments to try and identify positions, but in the end we leave it basically up to a department and a community to decide where best that service can be offered from.

So I think that is the process that we are going to embark on following our fulfillment of the commitments that were made in 1990.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, can the minister just elaborate as to what is the specific

process that his staff are using to ensure that the departments are looking within themselves to determine if there is any potential for reorganization/decentralization?

Mr. Derkach: Our Decentralization unit, which is very small, as you can see, do identify potential candidates for decentralization, and when those are identified, we then enter into discussions with the departments.

Then we are, of course, given an argument whether a particular initiative can or cannot be decentralized. Indeed, it becomes a bit of a negotiation situation.

In many cases, we learn why a department cannot decentralize, and then we also help departments in making the decentralization, if it is possible, a reality in terms of analyzing what the costs of it are, how it could benefit more Manitobans by decentralizing, and showing departments how you can actually, through example, for that matter, conduct the activity of a particular branch from outside of the city of Winnipeg and do it as efficiently and effectively as you can within the city.

It is a long process, and that is what our unit has been charged with.

* (1500)

Ms. Gray: Have any communities actually approached the minister or his staff to make suggestions about here is an opportunity where we feel that we could provide as a community a particular branch or part of an operation of government? Have any communities approached the minister or his staff?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, they certainly have. One of the prime candidates, or some of the prime candidates for that kind of discussion emerged in the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, Environment, Rural Development, and communities certainly ask us, for example, for economic development officers, for the presence of an I, T and T officer in a community, for the presence of a community services worker. Those kinds of things happen on an ongoing basis. We try to respond as best we can to those kinds of

requests. We try to do an evaluation to see whether or not that recommendation is feasible at all.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell me sort of the roles and responsibilities of the three staff? What basically is involved in their job, or is it written somewhere in these Estimates?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, as the member knows, the Decentralization unit was a special unit that was put together for the Decentralization Initiative. The then-director, Mr. Sid Reimer, was an individual who reported directly to the minister.

When I came into the Department of Rural Development and assumed the responsibility for Decentralization, we left the unit intact, however, reporting through the deputy minister to me. Since the departure of Mr. Sid Reimer, we have asked Mr. Barry Thomson to come on staff to assist us with decentralization. He did that initially by assisting us in the annual report.

We continue to use his services to help us with the existing numbers because this is a task that cannot be done by one individual. Although Mr. Robin Hall has done tremendous work in Decentralization, as can be evidenced by the number of positions that have been decentralized throughout Manitoba, he does need some assistance in dealing with departments and negotiating positions and then also dealing with Government Services to make sure that the space is there, dealing with communities. So it is a fairly involved task.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I was glad to hear in one of the answers a few minutes ago that the minister talked about looking at improvements to how we deliver government services and being more efficient. I recall asking a similar question in the Department of Education and Training this year, and the Minister of Education indicated that he thought government was fairly efficient. I was a little surprised to hear that from a former Minister of Finance because I think we have a long way to go in terms of making government efficient.

Is there a role at all in terms of the Minister responsible for Decentralization actually looking

at efficiencies of some departments and looking at high tech in terms of even looking at pilot projects to perhaps look at staff moving out into rural areas?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that is not a specific task that has been mandated to the Decentralization unit, but I can tell you that when we deal with many departments, because of sort of the approach that is taken in terms of sort of stepping back and looking at how departments operate, the unit can identify where certain functions can be better managed or better delivered through amalgamations and through, perhaps, technology. Those recommendations are certainly fed up through the system.

Specifically in terms of how a particular department can be reorganized and that sort of thing, that is not a function of our department. It is more a function of the central treasury and policy makers in government.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I was not here for the minister's opening comments or other comments—

Mr. Derkach: I will read it again.

Ms. Wowchuk: No thank you. You may take my opportunity to ask questions away if you read your comments, but I have a few questions that I would like to ask regarding decentralization. Some of them may go back to the minister's opening comments, so I hope you will bear with me.

I guess what I want to ask about is that the process is now a couple of years old, has an analysis been done by any department or by this department as to the impacts? I asked the question in Agriculture of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) if there was an analysis done and what the difference in costs were; whether there were cost savings to the department; whether there was an increase in cost; whether it resulted in greater efficiencies in the department. Of course, we know that this brings service closer to the people, and that is the objective of the whole process.

There is a possibility that there could be increased costs. That is not necessarily a negative, but what I am looking for is, who has done an analysis of the process, and what would the

minister's view be of it as related to cost and those types of things? We talk about being in a time of restraint, so I am wondering whether anybody has looked at what the end result has been of the process up to this point.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that question was also asked by the Liberal critic with respect to savings and that sort of thing. I would like to point out in the annual report on page 10 that there is a recap that has been done as to the status of the Decentralization initiatives. This was carried out by Mr. Thomson whom we asked to give us a hand after the Auditor's comments with respect to Decentralization and the fact that we should put an annual report together.

He did a fairly in-depth analysis of the status of decentralization and where we have been; what the operating costs and that sort of thing are in relation to what they would have been had these positions been in the city. On page 10 of the annual report, you will find that halfway down the page there is a figure that speaks to the savings in operating costs, which is \$527,000.

In addition to that, when you look at the accommodation cost comparison, you will note that there is a saving there of \$171,000 on an annual basis. Beyond that, we had mentioned some of the analyses that were done and the economic benefits that were accrued to Manitobans. If you look at page 12 of the Estimates supplement, it does give you a summary of economic benefits that have come to us as Manitobans. Also, at the back, Appendix "A" of the annual report, it gives you a sample of comments that have been put together for various program managers about various initiatives throughout Manitoba.

* (1510)

So that basically gives you a flavour of some of the impacts of decentralization. There are also impacts that cannot be measured, and those, I guess, we would have to gain by going out and speaking to those who are employed in rural communities and what benefits they have found in working in rural Manitoba. We have some of those.

Also, I think we can take some comfort in that—I previously said that there was a survey taken in Manitoba of civil servants, and the question basically was, if, for example, you had the opportunity to relocate in rural Manitoba, would you be prepared to relocate?

Approximately 250 employees have volunteered for relocation from Winnipeg to rural Manitoba under the decentralization initiative. That number far exceeds the 174 employees who chose not to relocate with their positions.

So it seems to me that there is a will for people who are working in departments now to relocate to rural Manitoba. So I think the overall impact has been a very positive one.

Of all the employees who were relocated to rural Manitoba, I think we had one, or have one, on a list whom we have not been able to place, and that is out of 640—some positions.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister said that there were 200-and-some people who responded positively when asked if they would relocate to rural Manitoba. How many people were surveyed?

Mr. Derkach: I believe this was sent out to the entire workforce of the Civil Service Commission, if I am not mistaken. The whole Civil Service received the request.

Ms. Wowchuk: When you look at the whole Civil Service Commission, if that is the response, it is probably not that high, but I am pleased to see that there are people within the Civil Service Commission who recognize that we in rural Manitoba do enjoy a certain quality of life that is, in our opinion, quite good. But we do need services there.

I am pleased that there are some civil servants who are willing to take that move, although I would have hoped that in those numbers it would have been higher. I do not know where the government is going, but certainly I believe there must be some discussion on whether there are other departments that can be moved, and certainly there are departments right now that have no connection to the city, that serve only rural Manitoba. So I would hope that that number would

be a little higher, and if there are other plans to further decentralize, that the civil servants would be willing to go.

I guess that leads to my next question. Is the government looking at further decentralization, and if it is, which departments are being considered at the present time?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, just in response to the first part of the member's question, the 250 whom I referred to were in addition to the 299 employees who chose to relocate from Winnipeg. So if you add those two figures up, that gives you a number in excess of 500.

The question that the member poses was also one that was posed by the Liberal critic, and I have to say again that decentralization is an ongoing thing now, where we will be re-examining positions and departments that could be good candidates for decentralization. That will be done on an ongoing basis, rather than saying, this is the end of Phase I and now we enter into Phase II.

What we try to do is match a Decentralization unit with services that are needed in rural Manitoba or could be offered from anywhere in rural Manitoba. We take into account the cost of relocation, the cost of operation, and we try to ensure that there is some reasonable, if you like, cost benefit or benefit to service to rural Manitobans.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have two questions, but first of all, the minister said, from anywhere in rural Manitoba. Of the positions, and I am sure he has answered this question before, that were decentralized, the 642, how many of those positions came from Winnipeg and how many were just moved around rural Manitoba?

Mr. Derkach: The 642 positions were all from Winnipeg.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess the reason I asked that question, I am thinking about the positions of Crown Lands positions. There were Crown Lands positions in—people who were working in Dauphin, I believe, who ended up working in Neepawa now. That is why I was asking the

question. Was it a matter of moving some people within the province?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, there are several examples of that, where positions in one part of the province have been moved to another part of the province. We do not credit Decentralization with that. That is basically a departmental internal move, with one exception, I have to say. There are some positions that we have targeted for Decentralization from, for example, the city of Brandon, where it makes sense to decentralize from Brandon to rural communities, and I refer to Mental Health Services and also to Family Services. Those services can be offered better in regional areas. The Decentralization unit is identified as being able to provide services better in regional areas by decentralizing from an area where there is a large number. If you are talking about positions moving from one community in rural Manitoba to another, that is not Decentralization. That is simply an internal move of the department.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for that clarification because it was the understanding that I had that those were in the total numbers. For example, there were Housing jobs in Swan River that went to Roblin and then the Crown Lands jobs from Dauphin to the Minnedosa area. It was my understanding that those were within the Decentralization numbers, and I did not think that those should be credited to Decentralization because they are not moving from urban centres to rural Manitoba. So that was the question. But if the minister says those are outside those numbers then my question is answered.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, when you have a reorganization of a major department like Housing, where we had all of those little units all over the province, the department was reorganized into units. There were some additions to jobs. There were new jobs created and there was also a consolidation of jobs.

Now, in those instances I would have to admit that probably if there was a position moved from somewhere, I do not know where it might have been, and the member used Swan River to Roblin,

I would think that that would have been used in addition to the Decentralization initiative. I can certainly check that out and give her the precise answer on that.

* (1520)

Ms. Wowchuk: If we could have that information I would appreciate it.

On another topic, it is my understanding that with the proposed OSB plant in Swan River there is going to be need for more forestry officers there to do the work. There is going to be need for someone from the Environment department to be stationed in the community. Is the Decentralization Committee giving any consideration, and does the minister have any indication as to the prospects of that, of additional jobs being moved into the Swan River area?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am not aware that there is a greater need for natural resource officers, forestry officers in the Swan River Valley at this time or in that whole Parkland Region. Louisiana-Pacific is not a reality at this time. We are just in the process of environmental hearings, and if I can encourage the member to support the initiative, certainly it may become a reality even sooner.

However, if in fact there is a request to enlarge the staff at the Forestry Branch, we certainly want to see that the staff are increased so that they are moved to rural Manitoba rather than increased within the city limits.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that if there was a request, who would that request have to come from? Would it have to come from the people of the area, or is it going to have to be a request from the department saying we need additional staff in this area? I am asking this because my understanding from talking to people on town council is that there has been some commitment by government to put additional staff in there within the Forestry department, and that is why I am asking whether this group is giving any consideration to filling those positions.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that request would have to come from the department itself because they would know what

the situation is and what their staff requirement is. I do not know what the staff complement is in Natural Resources in the Forestry Branch in the Swan River area, but if there is a need for more staff and that request or that initiative is undertaken by the department, our unit, Decentralization unit, will certainly ensure that those are going to be located outside the city and preferably in that cutting area rather than here in Winnipeg.

Ms. Wowchuk: Moving on to another area. In the community of Dauphin, there was a commitment made in the original proposal for decentralization to move the Vital Statistics branch to Dauphin. To date that has not happened and there is, of course, disappointment on the part of the people in that community because they had anticipated that they would have additional jobs where, in fact, they have lost jobs in the area. So how is the Decentralization Committee looking at that, and are there plans to address that commitment made by this government?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, there was a commitment made to Dauphin under the Decentralization initiative, and I have not abandoned that initiative yet, although, as I have indicated to the radio station there, we will not be moving Vital Statistics. So I am looking for another candidate, and I think there has been one that has been found that will yield somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 positions. I am not in a position to make that announcement now, nor can I give you any more detail on it, but I can tell you that we are in fact happy that we have been able to find an initiative that will yield about 20 positions in the Dauphin area.

I respect the fact that there have been changes in government which have taken civil servants out of communities. That has happened throughout rural Manitoba, not specifically in Dauphin alone. Dauphin did have one of the highest per capita civil servant complements in the province of Manitoba, so therefore there would be an impact there that would be felt much more than in maybe some other locations.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

That is not to say that we are abandoning the community of Dauphin in any way, shape or form. It is an important centre in the Parkland area. We want to ensure that there is a presence there of government employees and service providers. It is for that reason that when I was Minister of Education, I endeavoured to move the northern and native education component into the Dauphin area. So we continue to work at it, and hopefully, soon, we will be in a position where we can make some sort of an announcement in that respect.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you very much, and we look forward to that announcement. I am sure that the people of Dauphin also will be waiting to hear about that long-awaited announcement for their community. I am pleased that the minister does recognize that although Dauphin did have a high number of civil servants there, Dauphin is a regional centre and serves a very large area, and if you look at the surrounding areas, there are many communities that are serviced by Dauphin that have no civil servants. So I do not think you can just say that there is an overabundance of civil servants in the area. They do serve a very large area.

I also hope that the minister and this initiative will take into consideration the other regions, and one of the areas I have a concern with is the Department of Natural Resources and the number of positions that have been eliminated in the Department of Natural Resources and, as a result, reduced the quality of services and the ability to enforce the law in some cases, the ability to provide services to our tourists. I hope that this group of people will look at this as one of the areas where there is a possibility of moving some of the staff. If the department is not going to increase the staff, then look at the possibility of moving staff from the department closer to the people that are using the resources. I again refer to the forestry industry which is in my area and, as I had mentioned, law enforcement, game wardens and those types of things. There is a need, so I hope the department will give some consideration to the Natural Resources department when they are looking at further initiatives.

Mr. Derkach: I cannot answer for the Department of Natural Resources. Yes, there has been an impact on departments like the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Rural Development, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment probably, although I am not certain about the Department of Environment, but there have been impacts on those smaller departments as a result of us preserving positions and services in the Departments of Health, Family Services, and Education.

So, yes, we have taken our toll. I look at the Department of Government Services, and I know that in his department there have been significant amendments or changes made over the years because, again, that is a department, together with these others, that was reduced more severely to try and ensure that the services in the three big departments would be maintained, our priority areas.

But I can tell you that we are looking at positions in the City of Brandon, for example, and how perhaps some positions from there might better be delivered from communities outside of that area as well. So it is not just positions in Winnipeg. We are now looking at Winnipeg, Brandon and seeing how we can move positions to smaller communities out of these centres. If there is in fact greater number of staff that is going to be awarded to the Department of Natural Resources, I can tell you that my decentralization unit will be watching with interest and will certainly be taking a proactive stand in making sure that these positions are in rural Manitoba. [interjection]

Ms. Wowchuk: It is my fault. He has given me the floor. I have a couple of more questions, and then I will let it go to the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), but I have two more things.

* (1530)

An Honourable Member: I will not have any more questions left.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that there is a major announcement he is anticipating for Dauphin. Are there any other announcements of substantial amount that the minister anticipates

will be made with regard to decentralization in the near future?

Mr. Derkach: Absolutely. I think the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) made an announcement for me the other day that caught me by surprise. I was not particularly aware that had already taken place, but nevertheless there are announcements, yes, that will be made in the near future.

We have already made our commitment to Souris, and that is one that you know about. It has been outstanding for a long time. After four years, we have finally been able to, I guess, reconfigure how textbooks are going to be delivered in rural Manitoba, and the commitment to Souris is certainly being fulfilled.

There are others, yes. There is, just off the top of my head, I can think of Dauphin, I can think of Emerson that we have not fulfilled yet, and I am sure there are others.

Ms. Wowchuk: This is my last question.

When I look at the report here, the report indicates the decrease in cost of accommodations. Has a comparison been done on other costs such as telephone costs and other things? It may be in the report, but I have not had the chance to read through it. What I am looking for is, has there been a shift in costs to departments resulting in increased transportation? I would not think the transportation would increase, but what has happened with communication costs, telephones and things like that?

Mr. Derkach: I think it goes without saying, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that there will be some increased costs; however, what we do is we look at the overall impact in terms of increases or decreases in costs.

One of the other things that we have to remember is every time you move staff to rural Manitoba, there will be some costs in travel because services then are going to be much more available than they have been in the past. The service was usually by telephone in the past. Now it is, for example, environmental officers visiting sites, contamination sites perhaps or sites that have

problems, whereas before they were not done on that frequent a basis.

On page 22 of the annual report there is a breakdown of increases and decreases of costs. If you look at the chart, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, you will find that travel is up \$112,000, telephone is up \$78,000. The cost of computers—now this could be somewhat inaccurate because you know I am sure that there were new computers added and more computers added, so that is up \$19,900. Postage, Equipment Rental and Miscellaneous Expenses are up \$46,800.

If you look at the decreases: Accommodation, for example, is \$171,000 of decreases; Salaries, a \$300,000 decrease; the legal work that has to be done is \$144,700; and in Winkler specifically the marking of exams and tests has decreased by \$168,500; so the overall Net Decrease is \$527,500, which I think is fairly significant and certainly something that cannot be ignored.

We were not looking for this saving when we embarked on decentralization. I think all of us were aware that there would be some increased costs, but we needed to make sure that services were available to rural Manitobans. So in our best estimate we set aside \$10 million, and to date, we certainly have not accessed near, not even half of, what was allotted at the time. So I think it has been a pretty effective and pretty positive endeavour.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) to fill in the blanks left open by the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know what to say. I am just going to make a few comments and I have a few local questions. I guess my being co-operative with my other colleagues has created all the answers that I could possibly—maybe they should have just written their questions down and given it to me, so I could have got in on this.

An Honourable Member: Well, just fill in the blanks, Clif.

An Honourable Member: I feel like he got the leftovers.

Mr. Clif Evans: I have just a few questions now, if I may. Getting back to the original decentralization format as such when it was announced and began, what I was getting from the minister's answers to all the wonderful questions before was that it is structured now differently than what it was some years ago. At one point, there was a committee in charge—maybe not in charge of decentralization, but a committee that was responsible for the organization of the decentralization. Am I correct in that?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Decentralization unit has really not changed, except for the fact that Mr. Reimer has retired and we have asked Mr. Thomson to help us. However, there was a committee—it was an informal committee, if you like—of ministers who worked with the Decentralization unit in the beginning.

Once it was up and running, that informal committee structure did not have a need to meet again because the minister and the unit then embarked on the implementation of the program. But, in the initial stages, to put the program together, there were several ministers who assisted in doing that.

Mr. Clif Evans: Is there still any sort of committee that helps out with the Decentralization unit?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I should have indicated perhaps earlier, but I thought it was understood, that within the Decentralization Initiative there is an involvement of other departments. One of those is Government Services, which does provide the space for us, and the other one is Executive Council, which has a fairly important role to play in terms of the overall initiative. When there is a need, that group of departments meets with the Decentralization unit to go over the space required, a continuing process; indeed, Treasury Board is involved in that as well.

Mr. Clif Evans: So basically now and with the positions that we still have to fill, according to the minister, then really when it comes to decentralization of any type of a position, would I be correct in assuming that why go to the Minister of Decentralization with a request to decentralize a

position when if there is a need or a request they would have to go—let us say a municipality would want a position or two made available for it in Highways in an area. Why, then, would they approach the Decentralization unit for this when in fact the Highways department, the Highways minister or Executive Council has to make that decision whether indeed somebody should be going or could be going?

Mr. Derkach: The reason for the Decentralization unit being involved is to give an overall co-ordinated approach to how we utilize staff in rural Manitoba, where we can share space perhaps in rural Manitoba, where services are needed perhaps, where there is a commitment to decentralization and where that commitment could be fulfilled by staffpersons from any particular department moving to that region.

Basically, our role is to identify, first of all, positions within departments that could be candidates for decentralization and then to match those up with the communities that have been given the nod, so to speak, for candidates, for receiving decentralized positions. So by example, if we had committed positions to Dauphin, it is unlikely that departments on their own would see this as a priority in their workings, their day-to-day workings.

So the initiative would probably die if you did not have somebody co-ordinating it and driving it. For that reason, you have the co-ordination unit that knows that there has been a commitment made to Dauphin and is continually working with departments to identify the units or positions that can be decentralized to that location.

* (1540)

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but again then, all this in which you talk about commitment to community and identifying and the Decentralization unit co-ordinating all this and identifying, this is all still going back to the original—the minister said earlier this is the one and only phase of decentralization. Whether it has moved along smoothly or not over the past four years is another matter. The fact then is, these are, as he talks about, just commitments to certain

communities to identify whether they in fact qualify for any kind of decentralized positions.

But let us not talk, and as I made mention in my opening statement, let us not just talk of the 40-some-odd positions that are left, that the minister has indicated there is still commitment to communities which you will be making announcements. After these 40-odd positions or the commitments to these communities as he says are fulfilled, what is the next step?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the next step is to continue on with the co-ordination of moving positions to rural Manitoba where it makes sense, first of all, where you can build a business case or where you can provide a service that is needed by Manitobans closer to that region or within that region.

We have done, I think, a fairly admirable job in moving positions to rural Manitoba to this point. I cannot tell you that there is going to be another phase or another major initiative to move another 600 positions out to rural Manitoba. I do not see that at this point. Rather, I see a more—and especially when you look at the number of positions that have been decreased in the civil service as a whole, and the number that we have moved out to rural Manitoba, there has been a significant impact.

So down the road, I see decentralization taking on a role where we co-ordinate, we identify and co-ordinate the decentralization of positions from major centres, Brandon, Winnipeg, to communities where we can offer those services better. Secondly, we are going to be doing the same with our Crowns and encouraging them to look at it in that way, and when we can do that, I think we will be delivering services throughout Manitoba, closer to the people and with new technology, and as the electronic highway becomes a reality in Manitoba, we then are going to be able to even access more services to rural Manitobans and to all Manitobans from anywhere in the province.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, then I would, I guess, suggest or, if I may suggest and may sort of put a final touch to this point of

questioning, what should be done out there is the municipalities, the communities should be made aware perhaps of this process that you are talking about. You talked a lot of communities, and I am sure—and I know some of the communities in my constituency are not aware of what we have discussed today as to the whole process.

Now, if there is going to be a phase or another phase or if not, then we should perhaps deal with that, make communities aware that we should be—that I could say to communities, you know, if we want to identify your community for Decentralization, then let us make a direct request to the Decentralization unit to become identified. What I am saying is, instead of dealing through a department and then through Decentralization, why do we not deal with it from the Decentralization unit into the departments and for future?

I am sure and I am well aware that it is just not clear out there exactly how it is worked. This commitment that the minister talked about, the other communities and a lot of communities are saying, what about down the road, what is going to happen with decentralization?

Mr. Derkach: As I said, it will be an ongoing process. I cannot speak to what government will do in the future. If there is a window and if there are possibilities, I mean, there might be another phase, but I am not prepared to make that announcement or to indicate to you at this time that that is going to be the case.

I see an ongoing process where the Decentralization unit will continue to work with communities and departments to identify and to relocate where it makes sense.

Mr. Clif Evans: Just one or two more comments—in looking through the annual report, well, I do want to make a comment on the annual report and on the supplementary information. I feel that it is a much better way to deal with that part of the department, as before we were dealing with it on the whole Rural Development basis, and then whoever's idea it was, I commend him for moving that. I am sure it was someone on the minister's staff who thought about it. If we could, down and

in the future, expand the Decentralization program, I would encourage that the department make better aware of just how the system is going to work.

I mean, four years from the initial announcement about Decentralization and the problems and the questions that were out there before I think perhaps could be done away with in the future if just everybody was aware of how the system works. I make that comment just mainly due to the comments made to me over the past couple of years about the whole Decentralization program.

The minister talked about all the positions that have been moved, 642, and said they were committed to improving the economic base for communities and perhaps providing services to the different areas. It is rather disappointing to see that out of the 642 positions decentralized only seven were decentralized as such to Interlake. You talk about commitment to rural communities. I would think that the commitment should in fact be nonpartisan and that we should perhaps deal with the issues that are at hand, that being fulfilling the decentralization of the services to all communities in this province.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we do not deal by constituency, so when the member said Interlake, I was a little shocked, because I knew there were more in Interlake than just the number he had referred to.

Just by way of communities, we have Arborg with four, Asbern with two, Gimli with 12, Selkirk with 20.

Point of Order

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to clarify this and what the minister is trying to get into, I already have two pages here from last year and we also have the annual report here with all the numbers.

My question was, in fact, and my statement was, in fact, that if this program is supposed to aid and benefit rural communities throughout this province, and if the minister wants, then what I will say is give him the names of the communities

in my constituency, Interlake, and he can respond to that instead of talking about the whole Interlake.

* (1550)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister, to finish his response.

Mr. Derkach: The other community I wanted to mention was Teulon with three.

I do not know the boundaries of the honourable member's constituency so I really cannot respond to how many went into his particular constituency.

We looked at it in a broad sense. We looked at matching communities with services that could be provided from there and, yes, you could take any community in rural Manitoba and say, well, why did you not give me any positions in Crystal City or Pilot Mound or any of those.

What we tried to do was to identify communities within regions. We tried to identify growth centres where we could deliver services easily to communities. Where we could not, we tried to identify services that could be delivered from anywhere in the province to anywhere in the province, an example, Winkler with the Correspondence branch.

We did not look at it on a parochial basis constituency by constituency, rather region by region.

Mr. Clif Evans: In closing, what I will do is provide the minister and his Decentralization unit staff with a list of the communities within Interlake constituency with questions as to what potential or commitment there may be to those communities. I know I will get a response to it. I speak for all the communities that have received Decentralization positions and I am pleased for them. The ones that are in as close to my constituency, the Gimlis and the Teulons, I am pleased they were able to, but there are services that are required in other communities and the minister may have mentioned some. I think that is the direction we should be looking.

I have no further comments.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I just have one question. I want to follow up a bit from what my colleague was saying as far as how the decision is made where we should be decentralizing.

The minister had indicated earlier it was the department that identified positions, but I got the impression that if communities were looking for positions they could lobby the Decentralization committee to get these positions. I wonder if this is in fact true, that the committee is influenced by lobbying, because if that is the case, certainly as my colleague from Interlake has indicated, there could be a lot more communities lobbying.

Is this part of the process? Are the departments influenced by communities who begin to lobby to have services brought to their area?

Mr. Derkach: That is not how Decentralization emerged and it is not the way that we would proceed in the future. What we try to do is ensure that within regions of Manitoba there is a presence of government. We try to make sure that services that are delivered in a particular region of the province have something to do with either the activity within that region or they can be delivered to anywhere in the province from that particular region.

I go back to Winkler. The Correspondence branch is not something that only people in the Winkler area involve themselves with. It is a service that is taken advantage of by Manitobans right through the entire province, but it is a service that can be delivered from anywhere.

If there are opportunities and if there are needs as identified by the community, we are not shutting the doors and saying, well, you cannot talk to me, you cannot talk to us. Certainly, we have had communities in the past who have come and said to me, we believe that we need this kind of a service, why not look at us as a candidate for having a government service in our community? We respond as positively as we can to those kinds of requests.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do have one comment. I reminded myself when my honourable colleague was speaking that the minister of course mentioned during decentralization you identify whether there is space available of any kind and what not.

That certainly brings to light the point of Arborg where this government building is there, probably upwards of 30 to 40 percent sitting empty, and the only thing that was sent to Arborg was MPIC in Decentralization, which was appreciated by the community and surrounding area. However, we do have a government building sitting in Arborg, and the four positions that were moved to Arborg were MPIC positions and put in a different building that was made available for Autopac, for MPIC.

So my point again is that this commitment and this availability of everything else and services, you have space available, you have all the resources available, just no jobs, and it should be considered. Jobs were lost out of Arborg.

Thank you.

Mr. Derkach: Just in response, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I can tell my honourable friend that we have been approached by the community of Arborg. Yes, we do try to utilize government space when it is available as much as we can, and we are looking at how we can perhaps meet some of the interest and demand from the Arborg community and if that is possible, we certainly would be more than willing to do that. But, it has to make sense. It has to be effective and efficient.

* (1600)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 4. Decentralization \$100,000—pass.

Resolution 27.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,000 for Other Appropriations Decentralization for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1995.

This concludes the department of Decentralization. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Department of Government Services. Thank you

very much and thank you to the staff from the department of Decentralization for coming out today.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics an opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? Two minutes.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Government Services.

Does the Honourable Minister of Government Services have an opening statement?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the '94-95 fiscal year spending Estimates for the Department of Government Services.

It is an honour to be here. In '94-95 we did not participate in the '93-94. We passed that year, but '94-95 will see continuing benefits emanating from cost-conscious measures and practices which the Department of Government Services introduced in the past two fiscal years.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the department, through rationalization of space and aggressive negotiations, has again reduced its lease budget, overall budget for '94-95. Our planners worked with our clients to reduce space requirements and maximize the use of government-owned accommodation. Our leasing consultants were tougher than ever in their negotiations. Existing leases were carefully examined to reduce operating costs.

The important part is that kind of bottom-line performance was a result of co-operation within and across departments, which resulted in a reduction of \$2.2 million in lease costs for '94-95.

Last year Accommodation Development division initiated and completed, and it was the first, a comprehensive inventory of all owned and

leased space. This inventory contributes immeasurably to our ability to manage our portfolio and provide the base to launch the accommodation cost recovery program.

The accommodation cost recovery program provides the public with a fuller and more accurate accounting of the true cost of delivering programs and services. It also involves our clients in accountability for space costs. This also contributed to the reduction in lease costs. Occupancy had been a free commodity. Our clients often within the departments did not recognize the expense and certainly had no initiative to help reduce costs. We are changing the way we provide this particular service. We are doing more and more, and we are now doing it more cost-effectively.

Two years ago the workshops had a target to achieve full cost recovery on their operations within a three-year time frame. In order to accomplish this objective they significantly realigned their cost structure. They now have the ability to anticipate future demand and the flexibility to adjust quickly to meet it. They are meeting their customers' needs on time every time. They have examined each process and project and drive out unnecessary steps, procedures and costs. They know the meaning now of competition.

All the employees have received Total Quality Management training and have been very active in improving service quality and suggesting cost saving ideas which have been put in place saving time and money. This is reflected in the reduced cost, again, to the client, which is the government and the different departments.

The workshop is right on track. In fact, they are well ahead of schedule meeting their objective of full cost recovery.

Again, a very expensive part is the postal services. That is committed to providing low-cost mail services to their clients. They have been aggressive and innovative in packaging and negotiating rates with Canada Post, ensuring that we obtain the best rate available. They have identified opportunities to consolidate postal services from another department to realize the full

economies of scale. Every branch in every division in the department has adopted new principles that have fundamentally changed the way this department conducts its business.

The physical plant within the Property Management Division was among the first big institutional buyers in the province to recognize the substantial savings that direct purchase of natural gas offered. It was certainly a new business for us to be in but one that has provided us with about the lowest-cost natural gas in this market.

Fleet Vehicles, Manitoba's first Special Operating Agency, wrapped up their second year successfully. Internal operations have been thoroughly reviewed with a major effort to modernize the fleet vehicles information system.

An important change to the rate structure has had a major impact on individual departments and on government as a whole. The old system that charged a flat rate per kilometre was replaced with a fixed class variable rate structure. The new structure more closely aligns the cost of using a vehicle or the cost of providing it. Under the old system there was no penalty for departments that maintained underutilized vehicles. Conversely, departments that managed their vehicles well received no reward. The new rate structure has caused departments to examine their vehicle usage and seek their own cost savings.

We are now being talked to by governments across Canada and provincial governments on how we are operating our Special Operating Agency. As a result of the success of the first operating agency on April 1, 1993, we did this with the Materials Distribution, it was launched as another SOA. That was the culmination of a major effort required to produce the first business plan and charter. Under the SOA framework, the agency operates with greater flexibility and autonomy, with the emphasis on providing value-for-your-money products and services. We have not only saved money but have first-hand experience in the market and an accurate benchmark for in-house data entry functions.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, over the last several months the department has been negotiating the

procurement chapter of a much broader interprovincial trade barrier reduction agreement than what currently exists. This national agreement will not only cover goods procured by government departments, as does the existing national agreement, but in addition it will include services and construction. Furthermore, it is intended to cover Crown corporations and the MASH sector comprised of municipal governments, academic institutions, schools and hospitals. While it does not appear that coverage of Crown corporations will be as broad as we would like to see it, it will be a step forward towards more open competition within Canada. I am optimistic that the agreement will be signed in the very near future.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the common goal of our counterparts and fellow negotiators in the provinces, territories and in the federal government has been to reduce trade barriers by eliminating discrimination based on geographic origin and through the open tendering process. I believe that the agreement makes some progress toward realizing this goal. During the next year we will be working diligently to gain additional input towards more specifically delineating the agreement's application to the MASH sector. Through the implementation of a paid parking program, security and parking has generated substantial revenues for the government. Revenues have been further enhanced by extending the program throughout rural Manitoba and additional lots in the city.

With the introduction of electronic security systems, mobile patrols and central monitoring, the Security Branch has eliminated in excess of \$100,000 in annual security contracts from its operating budget and has saved the Department of Highways approximately \$130,000 annually from its operating budget for the security contracts. The further development of Central Alarm Monitoring and Security Dispatch Centre has enabled security services to monitor fire alarms, elevator alarms and building system alarms for Physical Plant. This will eliminate \$30,000 in the first year in fire alarm monitoring contracts and dedicate it to telephone lines for elevators. The centre provides 24-hour monitoring and paging services for the

critical staff. Work-alone contact is also provided for employees who work in government offices after hours and weekends.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Emergency Measures Organization is taking a lead in the province's review of mobile communications which are especially needed during times of emergencies. The Emergency Measures Organization is looking at how it is best placed within government to better service during emergencies.

I am proud to say the Property Management Division is an example of encouraging improvement through implementing the principles of Total Quality Management. Staff and management are sitting down and using their collective wisdom in addressing ways in which the department can improve their service to the people of Manitoba. A quality council is well established, and staff at all levels have become actively involved in generating ideas to improve the way the department does business. There are constantly 40 improvement teams at work at any one time. Total Quality Management brings about improvements by all levels of staff sharing ideas and expertise. Total Quality Management has brought about real savings and improvements to the department. For example, a one-time investment of \$30,000 for installing an alternate energy plant to utilize a more economical source of energy has resulted in annual savings in excess of \$22,000 per year.

* (1610)

Total Quality Management brought about changes at both Red River Community College, Agassiz Youth Centre, which reduced water consumption and reduced chemical waste, an economic and environment improvement. Total Quality Management also brought about improvements in the paper recycling program, safety apparel policy and service vehicle parking. Hundreds of improvement ideas have been generated and are underway to being implemented.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I believe these Estimates reflect the economic approach my

department, and especially in Government Services, has taken in preparing its annual budget. In closing, I would like to thank the employees of the Government Services for their hard work over the past year and pledge that together we will hold the line on spending while continuing to increase the quality of our service.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I thank the minister for those opening remarks. Does the critic for the official opposition party, the honourable member for Selkirk, have an opening statement?

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I will be very brief. I just want to thank the minister for his comments. As the minister suggests, we did not have an opportunity last year to deal with this department, so there are a number of issues we would like to raise. Unfortunately, we do not have a great deal of time to do it this year.

There are some specific issues I want to talk about, the proposal in Selkirk by a company called Jentan, who are interested in providing energy for the Selkirk Mental Health Centre and perhaps even the Selkirk Hospital and maybe even the Selkirk Recreation Complex. I want to explore that proposal with the minister and talk about many other issues, but we will just develop those issues as we go through the Estimates. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic for those remarks. Does the critic from the second opposition party, the honourable member for River Heights, have an opening statement?

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased to participate in these Government Services Estimates. The minister seems to have a mission with regard to Total Quality Management. Since there have been a number of articles now written and a number of serious financial magazines which indicate that TQM in fact is a fallacy and does not work, I think it is fascinating that he seems to attribute everything that he is doing to a theory which in some economic circles seems to be dead and/or dying. So I would like to spend some time debating that particular aspect with the minister as we get into Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I thank the honourable member.

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 the 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 his staff present.

We are on page 74 of the Estimates books.

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Hugh Eliasson, Paul Rochon, Stu Ursel, Bill Kinnear and Gerry Berezuk.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It will be 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$368,100.

Mr. Dewar: I just want to raise an issue here. It is fairly obvious there was an increase of \$3,000 in managerial. Can the minister explain this increase?

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, last year there was an understatement of \$2,400 on the salary budget, so really there is only an increase in the difference between those two. It was \$2,400, so that reflected—you have to carry it through to this year's budget. So it was an understatement last year of \$2,400 on the database.

Mr. Dewar: The issue was raising managerial one staff year, and this year it is \$95,500. Last year, it was \$92,300, which reflects an increase of about 3.5 percent. Who is the individual employed in this position, and why did he or she receive such a large increase?

Mr. Ducharme: That would be my deputy minister.

Mr. Dewar: Well, considering that the rest of the civil service took a 4 percent reduction in pay, how does this minister justify increasing his deputy minister's salary by 3.5 percent?

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, but that was the amount I originally told you about a minute ago in regard to 2.4 did not reflect his increment. His increment should have shown last year in last year's budget.

As you know, the staff throughout do receive increments and that was his increment increase.

Mrs. Carstairs: Since this Executive Support also develops the theoretical base upon which a government department operates, perhaps the minister would like to explain what his government department means by Total Quality Management.

Mr. Ducharme: I know the member for River Heights referred to that as it is old and it is dead; however, I guess you could call it many things, we just use that word. But what we have done through our department since I have been minister about the last three years is that—and we have been getting our department people together so that they can express their ways of saving money throughout the departments—they sit down on a continual basis and suggest their ideas.

We have brought in people from the private sector on day meetings, two-day seminars. Bristol Aerospace, we brought them in and they still use that word because they are in the competitive field. I feel that when you are dealing with supplying out of Government Services—unfortunately, Government Services is not a sexy department—it is a department where we save in departments of supplying services. It leaves those monies for other departments. So it has been a way that we have had our employees come forward.

I will give you a small example. We were using in this building and the Law Courts, linen cloths throughout the building, just to use as a small example, and one of our employees suggested at one time, why do we not use paper cloths the same as everybody else. I am talking about in the Clerk's Office, I am talking in the judges' chambers—throughout. I said, well, that should not amount to a lot of money. It amounted to a \$12,000-a-year saving. This was a result of just having somebody at the table discussing things that they saw every day.

I just want to use that as a small example, but these are the type of things that we have had happen in our postage department; we have had happen in coming forward from our many, many departments where people normally are not heard

from. So what we tried to do is we tried to gather people from all our different departments, put them together and call it what you will. I just keep using the words "Total Quality Management." Call it something else; however, I think that continuing together and expressing other things that they feel can bring savings is an excellent idea.

Mrs. Carstairs: I rather liked the linen cloths, I must suggest, but I will do with the paper if it saves \$12,000 a year.

What I get from the minister is that he is not philosophically buying into a so-called economic theory called TQM, but has in fact, for lack of a better word, "commercialized" the Department of Government Services, brought efficiencies to the Department of Government Services, involved the staff of Government Services in helping him to arrive at good decision making and in fact is employing a hands-on management skills style.

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, I agree with every word you say, because unfortunately we do not get that message across. I briefly mentioned it in my brief remarks that we now make all the departments throughout government accountable for all their office space. Now is that not remarkable? Finally, governments say to an office that, hey, you will now be accountable. It will be charged to your budget, not just fed through the Department of Government Services, and then we spread it throughout and we ask for that on the other side of our department, on our cost issue.

* (1620)

It is amazing at some of the spaces that now departments have given up through that process.

That could not be done until we did our study on the total utilization of every square foot throughout departments, and we found that—I do not want to pick on a department, and I will not mention any names, but you can go to a department that might have supervisors who might show up once a month, but they had an office downtown in a building, a 10-by-12 office, but they might only show up once a month. When they found out that that now reflected directly in with their budget, and when they were told to come back with

reductions in their budget, they were starting to come back with office space.

Mrs. Carstairs: That is interesting, since some of them seem to have bigger office space than some of the MLAs.

The interesting thing about what the minister is saying, and I hope other ministers are listening, is that there was a consultative process with employees. Is that accurate, that in fact you were consulting with employees in the Department of Government Services?

Mr. Ducharme: Absolutely. What we have done is, we have given them the opportunity of joining in. Where it was really successful again is your Special Operating Agencies, where they now feel like they are part of a little company and they feel like they are really contributing now.

You mentioned about the office spaces. Well, we fixed that too. We have now come out with a program that, not necessarily because you are a deputy minister and not necessarily because you are an assistant deputy minister do you have the same office space. We have now geared it to say that it is what you do as an assistant deputy minister and what your requirements are, that now there are maximum amounts but there are also—and we have now adjusted to the office spaces.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$368,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$39,200—pass.

1.(c) Finance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$644,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$166,900—pass.

1.(d) Human Resources Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$450,700.

Mr. Dewar: I would like to ask a few questions about the department's affirmative action program. Would the minister provide us with an update of that program, please?

Mr. Ducharme: Is he asking for the numbers percentages-wise or what we do on training programs?

Mr. Dewar: Yes, you could provide us all that information, please.

Mr. Ducharme: I can get you the numbers. The personnel do not have those numbers, but I know we had them the last couple of years. I can give you a breakdown on affirmative action, where they are placed exactly. I know there is a list somewhere. I have seen it before. I can get you those numbers.

We have been actually concentrating mostly on the training sessions and the framework and additional training dealing with affirmative action.

As you can probably appreciate, Government Services is the type of department that is easily accessible for redeployment as you reduce positions. It is one department that we can retrain, and we have been concentrating on the redeployment of our employees.

Mrs. Carstairs: Giving those numbers of the target groups, is it also possible for the minister to provide how many of those are in managerial and professional technical positions?—because quite frankly, it is not enough that you have 52 percent women, if the 52 percent women are all doing clerical work. So I would like to see a breakdown by job description.

Mr. Ducharme: I agree, and I will provide those, because I know those numbers. I have seen them before and I will provide you with those numbers.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass?
Pass. (2) Other Expenditures \$111,900—pass.

1.(e) Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$336,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$61,100—pass.

1.(f) Lieutenant-Governor's Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$97,100.

Mrs. Carstairs: I really do not want to talk about the Lieutenant-Governor's office, I want to talk about the Lieutenant-Governor's house, which in my opinion is one of the most beautiful examples of its style of architecture anywhere in this province, and quite frankly, the interior is in need of serious upgrading and has been for the last 20 years.

Can the minister update us on when we are going to get wallpaper which has been damaged by flooding in the living room and dining room area

replaced? When are we going to get some air conditioning for the individuals who live in the Lieutenant-Governor's home, so that it truly is not only beautiful from the outside but is also a pleasure for those who visit?

Mr. Ducharme: I am glad someone noticed, other than myself, when I became minister three years ago—well, not quite three years ago. When I first sat down with Dr. Johnson a few years ago, there was no means of—if you take a look at his budget it was kind of hat in hand that he asked about it. He would come forward and the Lieutenant-Governor of the day would say, well, I want this done, I want that done, and unfortunately there was no real budget established for the Lieutenant-Governor.

People think that the person who is there lives in the most precious house there is. It is a precious house as far as history and everything else is concerned, but unfortunately it is not the most comfortable house to live in. So what we did was, and again I can get a breakdown for the member, but we have established a 10-year program.

We started working on, if you notice the rooms, some of the bedrooms, we are doing some of the bedrooms upstairs. We did the entrance foyer room—I forget what it is called—the Manitoba Room. We did some carpeting in the main room; we re-upholstered furniture in the main ballroom. We did some wallpapering in the main ballroom. I do not really think much of the existing one that we have. I have not got the figures handy, but last year, and I believe the program is in approximately \$135,000 to \$140,000 a year that we are doing now on that particular house.

As you can probably appreciate, anything we do is ridiculous, the cost, but not ridiculous as far as keeping the house. For instance, we had lists of repairing art, and I said why would we start repairing art when we still have carpeting to do and wallpaper, as you have said, throughout the building. It is not just the wallpaper we have to do. Unfortunately we have to do under the wallpaper, and the leakage, and so when we do that then we will do the wallpapering.

To give you an idea of the art. I went to the Art Gallery, and the lady—I forget her name over

there who teaches—suggested, why will you not let us do it, and we will do it as part of our contribution to the house. So what they have done is they have—and we give them some art, and they redo the art, but the first bills I saw, or not bills, but estimates, were ridiculous. Now they are doing us a real, real favour by reconstructing some of the art that is there, which is also a very, very important part of the house.

* (1630)

Mrs. Carstairs: Having lived in a vintage house myself, I do have some idea of how much it costs to—[interjection] Well, as the member knows, I sold my house and left it up to the Langs to do it. But the reality is that it is a very, very costly measure to do, but it does not get any less costly as the years go along. It just gets more and more expensive.

Can the minister—I will ask if he has done any other kind of outreaching, obviously to the Art Gallery was a very valid one. Has he been in touch with any of the major companies in redecorating, for example, to see if they would be interested in giving a gift to the province, which is tax deductible in return, for restoring that house to its optimum?

Mr. Ducharme: I have not heard, but it is certainly a good idea. I wonder if we can do that with the building that we are sitting in here today that is looking at, again, about, I think, over the next five or six years—most people do not realize that there is a severe damage; we are not just repairing steps—the tune of about \$8 million or \$9 million we are going to have to spend here over the next four, five years. Then the Law Courts is the same way.

But that is a good idea. As a matter of fact, the staff will take note, and maybe we can see if some of our contractors around that are involved and a lot of people, even when they are looking to help out, will maybe even do it on a different type of scale. Maybe they will donate some of the managerial skills that they have. We have it in our department, but even if it was just donating that type would save us money. Good point.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(f)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$97,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$62,500—pass.

2. Property Management (a) Executive Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$157,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$22,500—pass.

Item (b) Physical Plant (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$17,951,900.

Mr. Dewar: I have a number of questions to raise here. It was in 1992, the government closed the Human Resources Opportunity Centre in Selkirk. Since then, the buildings and, I guess, the equipment are unused. I was wondering if the minister can tell us today the government's plans for those buildings in that facility.

Mr. Ducharme: I remember the ad went out. The equipment was auctioned off in April. Now we will market those buildings and hope that they will be used for industrial use that maybe will create some employment in the area, but we first of all auctioned all the equipment off.

Mr. Dewar: I know that the government asked the town if the town was interested in taking over the centre, and they declined. I think there are some local, not local, but some industries interested in taking over the plant. Can the minister provide us an update on some of the negotiations with those organizations?

Mr. Ducharme: Apparently, we have had about three people approach us. As we do with government buildings, we would now advertise for proposal calls and have them come forward officially because, as you can appreciate, we are dealing with government buildings. We tender out and make proposals, ask for proposal calls when someone shows an interest.

Mr. Dewar: Are there any plans by the government to utilize any of the office space? I know that there is a need for office space in Selkirk. Has the government ever considered using this space as appropriate office space?

Mr. Ducharme: I am informed no. However, we do have a plan to utilize some office space in

Selkirk: We are doing that now but, no, we do not require it for office space.

Mr. Dewar: You mentioned that there will be some office space. What departments are going to be moving into Selkirk?

Mr. Ducharme: Some of the Family Services people are going to the Selkirk mental hospital and that will relieve some office space, make it available in the government building. When that government building comes free, well, then we will ask different departments out there, tell them that we have some office space available.

Mr. Dewar: Is the minister aware of any plans to move Highways jobs from Selkirk to Beausejour?

Mr. Ducharme: No, I am not aware of any of those. To the member for Selkirk, normally what we will do is, once a decision is made by a department, they will come forward and they will make the proposal. They will ask us to look up and accommodate them, and then our job is to go out and call for proposals and then take it to the Treasury Board from there.

Mr. Dewar: Do you know what the costs would be to the government to move those jobs from Selkirk to Beausejour? I believe there are 30 employees that work in the Highways department there.

Mr. Ducharme: All we would know is if you were moving some jobs from one location to the other. We would be providing the accommodation. That is all we provide. The department is the only one that can probably tell you what the costs would be, but we provide the accommodation in the new offices wherever anyone goes throughout the province. We provide the moving, but I could not tell you.

Mr. Dewar: What plans does the minister have to upgrade any of the facilities at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre?

Mr. Ducharme: We have an ongoing—to give you an idea, this year, and I think it is in my—I mentioned it in some remarks in the House one day, that we have the barrier-free, for instance. I can give you that number. That alone is going to be

three-quarters of a million dollars just to improve that part of the aspect.

Mr. Dewar: I want to explore this issue of Jentan Resource Limited. Is the minister aware of that particular company that is interested in providing steam energy to the Selkirk Mental Health Centre?

Mr. Ducharme: We have only been approached by the individual. We have told him what our requirements would be if he did come in. From here on in he goes back I guess until he makes complete proposals; he goes back to find out where he is environmentally. We have only had a very, very brief, short discussion with him on that building. We told him what we would require him to do if he came in and now it is up to him go back to the environment.

Mr. Dewar: From your initial discussions with this individual, do you think that they will be able to provide your need in terms of energy and steam?

* (1640)

Mr. Ducharme: I am told in the discussions, and these are just preliminary discussions because we talk again about only the accommodation, he has a problem with the load level for the remainder of the year. He can only provide the costs of the building for a portion of the year.

Mr. Dewar: I attended a meeting in Selkirk a month and a half ago where this individual made a presentation to council and to the community, and they suggested at that time he could supplement your demand in the summer, but not for the winter, is that right?

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, that is correct. As you can probably appreciate, under the buildings, we can have a lot of people who would like to get into the government buildings and not pay the full share. Unless he can arrange something through I, T and T, Industry, Trade and technology, or someone can come forward and help him out and get started, start-ups, we do not have that availability in Government Services.

Our whole idea now is cost recovery. I am not saying the odd time someone from Family Services or someone of that group that needs a thousand square feet that is alongside a building,

that we do not try to help them out, but in a larger aspect like that, we do want to get our cost recovery, at least our cost recovery on it.

Mr. Dewar: It is a fascinating proposal, but, of course, it would be based upon the Government Services purchasing their energy that they will produce.

How many employees currently are there that work for Government Services that provide the service to the Mental Health Centre? How many employees are there in the power plant now?

Mr. Ducharme: I am informed there are seven.

Mr. Dewar: If this plant were to be developed and if it would meet your requirement, what would happen to those seven employees?

Mr. Ducharme: That is hypothetical, it is almost like an if question. We really cannot tell you that. We have to know what their load levels are.

Mr. Dewar: What about the renovations to this building that we are in now? I want to thank the minister for taking me on a tour of the construction. I have had an opportunity see the huge amount of work that is being done, but, of course, we raised the issue in the House about the lack of a handicap access ramp to the front of the building.

Has the minister reconsidered his stance in that area and will he now be moving towards putting in a ramp to allow handicapped Manitobans to enter the building through the front door?

Mr. Ducharme: Now this was all looked at a few years ago when we did the west, when we did all of the work on the west. We did meet with several groups, and we did meet with, I am trying to think of the other group that we met with. It was considered that a combination of parking availability on the west side, and as you can probably appreciate, because of the lower level you can make the ramp that it is not a high level type of ramp.

If you want to talk about the front or the south or the north—I still say the south part of the building is the best part of the building and is the nicest part. I think history states, I still think it is the front but anyway—

An Honourable Member: Where the river is.

Mr. Ducharme: Right. And history goes back to where the river lies. I will tell you when we get finished this summer, it will be nicer looking than the north.

Anyway, we did look at a ramp and you would end up with a ramp of 150 feet. No matter which way you do it, to get the proper pitch you would look at a ramp that would be 150 feet. The only other way you could provide access is an elevator. An elevator could be provided, but how do you build an elevator in this type of a structure?

So as you can probably appreciate, we all sat down with these groups and they came to the conclusion that, hey, if we make sure of the level to get in and out and parking is provided and a warm vestibule for them to wait can be provided, it would be accommodating. They also were happy when we talked about that if they looked at that, we also could accommodate them to be the first time they could go in the gallery.

As you can probably appreciate, the Speaker was involved in that. They might have not gotten the entrance to what you would call the north side or the security side of the building, some people call it the front side, they got the best seats in the House.

If you take a look at where the handicap is in the Speaker's Gallery, we took out all the seats in the Speaker's Gallery, reconstructed the Speaker's Gallery, and they have an access to get to the Speaker's Gallery. To be honest with you, we sat down and we tried everything possible to provide them with what we considered the best we could do in a building like this.

You know I have read off to you the barrier-free program that we started conducting in '88-89 and the almost \$3 million to buildings. We have buildings throughout the rural area, not only in the rural area but in the city of Winnipeg that have no access at all. We now have two to this particular building. People say, well, they have to come in that way. But if you take a look, the parking is close, the area to get in and out is excellent. If it means that we have to provide some more lighting,

fine, we will provide more lighting if that was the issue.

I am meeting with Mr. Lane and Mr. Martin in the next little while. I believe Mr. Lane is getting married or something, and I cannot meet with him right away, but I will make sure that the Speaker is involved. I will make sure that my total office staff is involved, and we will do everything comfortable.

However, at this point, if you are saying to me, have you decided on a ramp, even if you are doing the stairway, what we are doing now is mostly a foundation change, and we have to replace the Tyndall stone or the stone on those steps. A ramp would be another issue, because the ramp would almost be a zigzag of 150 feet either starting at Broadway Avenue, starting at Kennedy Street or starting at Osborne Street to get to those heights. Fortunately, the west side and the east side, you have the lower level that is easier to get in and out of. You saw how they have dug out all the stairs, you cannot get to the lower level from the south or the north.

Mr. Dewar: I want to thank the minister for the answer. I am pleased that he is going to be meeting with the individuals who are raising their concerns with us.

I would like to ask what the total cost of the project is, and when does he anticipate it to be completed?

Mr. Ducharme: Which one? I have three going on, or I will have three going on this year.

First of all, if you take a look at the stairs, all three stairs will be done. I believe the contract for that is approximately three-quarters of a million dollars. Four stairs will be done. The reason for that was because of the crumbling and the water getting in and crumbling the basement.

Also if you look at the front portico, after we get the north stairs done, we are going to be doing what they do in Europe. We are going to be putting up scaffolding covering the total front or north of the building, the north side of the building and repairing all of that. If you look under the roof, we have to take all the limestone on the roof off and

then restructure the roof and restructure all under the canopy and all along the edges.

Then what we will do is clean it all up at the same time. We are not just going to be going there to clean it. That would be the least of our worries because there is equipment now that will pressure clean it with water that will make it look real nice.

The reason why we are doing all these projects this year is because we do not want any going on next year at our 125th. That will be just the start of the process. The major part will be the roof—I call them figurines, there is another name for them. Figurines and décor all throughout the building will be done over the next five or six years.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) raised it. A concern that we had when you gave me your tour was the condition of some of the trees and the shrubs and whether or not you will be able to save them. Can you just provide us with an update on how you are making out in that area?

Mr. Ducharme: As I told you when I took you around—and I offered it to the Liberals, and unfortunately Neil had another engagement that day. I explained it briefly to Neil. As a matter of fact, we are going to take him around this week.

As you can probably appreciate when you are waterproofing all the stairs—[interjection] Are you going around? Okay, well, then I would appreciate you coming. Would you like to go around and look at it? It is very interesting to go below the base and everything. But the waterproofing, you have to excavate all along because it should have been done in the first place. Unfortunately, it was done at the top, and it was not done along the edges.

We will have to disturb some shrubbery and some trees. Mr. Brown—you have met him—he would not take out a tree here unless it was absolutely necessary. I mean, this is his backyard, and this is his pet. That has been handed down. He has been here over 30 years since Mr. Churcher [phonetic] was here. He took over from him. These people pride themselves. And he says, Gerry, I will put in every available tree and try to replace it.

* (1650)

Some of the trees are a little too close. Over a period of time—it is like building houses. You plant your tree, your kids are one year old; you come back to look at it, and the person you sold the house to is tearing them out 30 years later. You say, why are they tearing those trees out? Well, that is the same thing that happens here. We will take every precaution in replacing the trees with as mature trees as we possibly can.

Mrs. Carstairs: I want the minister to know that I received only two phone calls about the whole access debate that we engaged in. Both of them agreed with the minister that the west side was in fact the better and more appropriate entrance.

One of them, however, did raise something. I will just bring it to the minister's attention at this particular time. Apparently the closest women's washroom to that west entrance does not have handicap washroom facility. Many of them, particularly when they are exposed to the cold, need to use the washroom facilities as soon as they get into the building. So the request of this individual was, leave my access where it is, where my parking is, but please give me a handicap washroom in that particular area.

Mr. Ducharme: I talked to another individual—what is better than that is we spent \$90,000 to build the ramp or the chair lift up to the gallery. Beautiful—I do not know whether you have had a chance to look at it. However, unfortunately again, they have to go down to the basement to the washroom, and you know how large the washrooms are on that level. So what we are going to do now is we are now looking at providing, as you said, the washroom close to the vestibule downstairs and also look at redoing a washroom for them close to the gallery.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have another question with regard to access in the building. That is, there seems to be every access to the building except for one rather important room. That is the Assembly itself. There is no access for a member to sit in any chair in that Chamber, and that is clear with the present difficulties being encountered by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). Is there any

movement to make one of the seats in that Chamber wheelchair accessible?

Mr. Ducharme: When we were doing the gallery, we started thinking and started talking about the frightening aspects. That did come under discussion, and the biggest problem is what side, where. The discussions that I have heard was that you would probably make one of the first rows, one of the upper benches accessible. However, that is not as scary as say the Premier or the Leader of the Opposition all of a sudden a stroke or something along those lines and in our occupation that is quite possible, but we felt that we could become very easily adaptable. We could do it very, very quickly. So it is in hand that there is a plan that if something unfortunate like that does happen that we would do that.

Mrs. Carstairs: With respect to the security system in this building, can the minister give us an upgrade on how it is working because my sense of it is it is working extremely well since we have essentially limited access to the building to the north side because we could certainly have a disagreement. I happen to agree with the minister that the most beautiful side is the river side, and that should in fact be considered the front of the building and probably was at some point in the history of the building, but any upgrade that you can tell us.

Is there a need to provide further security or is there a sense now that we have achieved a security level which is appropriate for the building and for the protection of all those who work therein?

Mr. Ducharme: I would have thought it was secure until last week till one of the minister's offices—somebody paid it a little visit and jumped out the windows.

We have installed more and more camera equipment. I have a briefing note on it, but I know what we have done. We have brought in more and more cameras throughout the area. We try to accommodate people going in and out. I think the part that will need some upgrading a little further will be the south side. We know, as a result of the development that will be going on on the south side that was announced approximately a month

ago, that there will be more lighting, and there will be more people utilizing the grounds. I think the utilization will probably even help, because as you know if it is not lit properly and people have places to hide and things like that, that is the worst, the surprise element, even to the people in the security offices and people that are going around the building.

No one likes to lock up the building, but however we do have a building that belongs to the people of Manitoba, and it should also be very well looked after. There are people who will abuse the building if we do not carefully watch it.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have no difficulty with the present level of security at all in the building. Having been to the Quebec National Assembly and having to go through a series of metal detector systems and other forms of security, I think that we have been able to stay on the modest side of security. If we can remain there, then I would like to see us not have to go any further.

What I really wanted from the minister is a sense of whether he thinks that we now have an adequate level for most incidents that are going to take place in this building. Obviously, you are always going to have the occasion of a bizarre individual who might in fact exhibit bizarre behaviour, but I am not sure no matter what kind of security you have you can protect yourself against that.

Mr. Ducharme: We are not considering metal detectors or any coming out of the building. I think we are upgrading more of the laser type. I can give you the upgrades for this year. In '93, for instance, the security system was expanded to include two new exterior CCTV camera locations which overlook the legislative grounds from the top of the Legislative Building. Those are the ones that are colour, night, and not black and white.

Additional initiatives have included the installation of security alarms, again, this is out of town to the Thompson and Swan River provincial buildings. In '94, as I mentioned lighting earlier, the lighting will include upgrading of the security system; again, in the Law Courts we are going to upgrade some more security there. Basically it is the lighting. That seems to be the worst part about

security; if someone has to park around the front of the building on the river side, they have disadvantages.

Mrs. Carstairs: I am getting some elbows from the gentleman to my left here with respect to a phrase that nobody seems to want to talk about with respect to this building, and that is air conditioning. There have been, however, some substantial innovations made in air conditioning in the last several years. At one point to air condition this building would have been next to an impossible event. It also would have been next to impossible in terms of the cost, but there have been some new technologies.

Have those new technologies now been evaluated in any way for this particular building so that it could become, particularly on the third floor, a workable environment for people who have to spend long hours here? I am not necessarily referring to MLAs. I am, in fact, referring to staff.

Mr. Ducharme: Without admitting that I would be the first minister to install air conditioning and probably the last, we have looked and we have had people in to look at the building, along with a building that you had mentioned earlier, and that was the Lieutenant-Governor's house.

People do not realize, but even as we renovate the building, if you will look at the ceilings that are dropped and that type of thing, we are putting, I guess, over a period of time, we are trying to put in the correct ducts and distribution so that we do not have to put those in and tear them out the next time. Over a period of time, when air conditioning is affordable, whenever, and I do not know what the last figures were again, even under the new—within a couple of years ago, I am sure it was about a year ago, I think it was close to \$8 million to \$10 million still to do the air conditioning. When your roof is falling apart and it is crumbling, I guess we will do that and then maybe we can consider—you know, you get questioned in regard to some of the smaller things you do around.

* (1700)

We try to be very, very fair from the minister's office and I am waiting for my special assistant to try and share the small amount of carpeting we do

there. We spend probably on carpeting and painting, \$60,000 a year. When you consider that on an \$800-million building, that is not a lot. The air conditioning, I guess, someone will have to face that down the road.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

Committee rise.

JUSTICE

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): 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 Department of Justice. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber?

We are on item 5, page 113, of the Estimates manual.

5. Courts (a) Court Services.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Chair, I would just like to take a moment to introduce to the committee Mr. Marvin Bruce who is the ADM of Courts, and Irene Young who is the Director of Court Services.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Does Pat Dunlop report to Ms. Young? Is that the line of authority?

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the members beyond the critics that are in the Chamber if they could please carry on their conversations in the loge. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the member's questions and the responses of the honourable minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, yes, that is correct.

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that there has been a statistic that has been used from time to time that reflects the rate of default of maintenance orders in Manitoba. I understand that that rate, at least at some point in the past, has been calculated on a monthly basis. I am wondering if the minister has information as to the default rate in the last four months.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the default rate has been very difficult to establish an accurate number or a precise number, because there are a number of variables that need to be considered. The default list reflects all accounts with money owing at that day. The system cannot distinguish between accounts with reporting provisions or new orders from court where direct payments may have been made directly and the program has not yet received confirmation, or orders varied provisionally that have not been made final, or accounts with payments being made through garnishment or pay assignments, or, finally, accounts where enforcement has been stayed and no action has been taken to collect.

So the figures available would not reflect a proper picture based on all of those variables that I have just spoken about.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if the minister can advise whether the same measurement of default rate, though, has been in place for some time. In other words, were the same problems inherent in the statistic back in 1992 as are there now?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand that the numbers may now appear higher because there are more variable orders now than there were in the past. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of the orders registered with Maintenance Enforcement Program provide for payments based on the payor's income or employment status.

The program monitors at the highest rate, and the balance is reduced once proof of income is received. Some payors report on a monthly basis, and some orders require quarterly or other reporting periods.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, given the caveats as to the ability of the statistic to measure actual default, would the minister advise what the default rate is for the last four months, what it has been by month?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not able to provide a number that reflects people who are simply not paying anything or reflects exactly what the default is. I understand the member's question with all of these caveats, but you cannot just put aside all of the

caveats because they appear to factor into a number.

We are having great difficulty in providing that kind of statistic which, I believe, is the basis of the question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, just for the record then, would the minister clarify that straightforward maintenance enforcement orders of specified amounts at specified times going into default are not represented in any figure?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed no, we do not have that precise figure.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise how much monies were recovered for Social Allowances in the last fiscal year?

Mrs. Vodrey: The total monies collected on income security accounts in 1993, the total is \$2 million.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is that for the fiscal year up to March 31, 1994?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, that is the calendar year to the end of December 1993.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have the figures for the fiscal year?

* (1440)

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that we could calculate it for the fiscal year. We do not have it available today.

Mr. Mackintosh: I ask the minister if she could provide that. I think that would be important information, and then we can compare that to the expenditures and the cost effectiveness of the program. Would the minister undertake to provide that information?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I will undertake to provide that.

Mr. Mackintosh: There has been an extraordinary increase in the amount of arrears owed by payors outside of Manitoba, particularly over the last four months. I understand the amount to have increased by 8.2 percent. At the same time, it is my understanding that the officers assigned to REMO-in are the most heavily burdened by caseload. I am wondering if the minister could

explain why this is the case, and is that heavy caseload perhaps not responsible for the tremendous increase in the arrears of payors outside of Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that additional staff is not the issue here. The issue is the enforcement of the order, and the enforcement takes place outside of our jurisdiction. So it is not a matter of staff in our jurisdiction; it is a matter of enforcement in the other jurisdictions.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just remind the minister that the experience in Manitoba has been the squeaky wheel gets the oil, and the same would hold true for orders that are filed elsewhere. I would think, if there were someone on the case all the time, that there would be more effective extraprovincial enforcement.

Just an answer to a question from an individual: Italy, does it have a reciprocal arrangement with Manitoba? I do not know if the minister can provide that now.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not able to provide the answer, but I will undertake to provide the member with a list.

Mr. Mackintosh: It appears that there is a very heavy caseload for the REMO-out officer. I understand there are a couple that are working on that, but one of them, in particular, has an extremely high caseload. I am wondering what steps the minister has taken to deal with that disproportionate load.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I would like to take a moment just to correct the record, because in answering the last two questions, obviously we did not hear the REMO-out and REMO-in correctly. I would like to correct the record for the member and answer the two questions that he has provided.

His first question was about REMO-in and the caseload of REMO-in. REMO-in, where the payor lives here in Manitoba, the caseload is somewhat high at the moment in REMO-in. However, we do have additional staff in training, and that additional staff in training will be able to assist, and we expect those caseload numbers to be brought down.

The second question was regarding the REMO-out, where the payor lives outside of our jurisdiction, and in that case the answer is that the enforcement takes place outside of our jurisdiction. So it has been our experience that it is not the number of maintenance enforcement officers but it is instead that there is co-operation in the other jurisdiction to enforce the payment.

However, I understand the member's comments that he has just raised on that matter in terms of the perhaps number of contacts. So I hope that clarifies both REMO-out and REMO-in.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have actually had some difficulty in going through the information as to what REMO-in and REMO-out mean, but I did get a memo from the Maintenance office which defined REMO-in as in brackets payor not in Manitoba. So that would seem to contradict what the minister has just said, or is the information from Ms. Dunlop faulty in that respect?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, REMO-out, the payor is not in Manitoba. REMO-in, it is the payee that is not in Manitoba, but the payor is in Manitoba.

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps the minister would just pass that on to Ms. Dunlop. This relates to a fax of May 25.

I recall the minister advising in Question Period on one or two occasions that there were five new staff members at the maintenance office. I cannot see where that figure comes from. I believe at a later date she advised there were two. I cannot find that either. I am wondering if the minister can provide the details of the staff changes this year over last.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the answer that I have given in the past is that there have been five new staff over two years. There were three new staff added last year. There are two new staff who are being added this year, and they are noted in the Estimates book, page 71.

Mr. Mackintosh: Have both of the positions now been filled?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that both were filled. One left, so now we are in the process of filling an additional position.

* (1450)

Mr. Mackintosh: Given that we are looking at a net increase of one, I understand that there are some junior people that are helping out on a temporary basis. Is my understanding correct, that they are students or in that kind of capacity?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, just so that the tone of what has occurred is accurate, there are two new people to be hired. Two new people were hired. One of those new people has subsequently left. We are in the process of filling that position.

I want to make sure that the record accurately reflects the fact that two people were in fact hired. Occasionally, circumstances cause people to leave their positions. That is what happened. We are in the process of filling that. We expect it to be filled very shortly.

In addition then to the two new staff which are noted in the Estimates book, we have three STEP students who are students on summer employment. These students are working to input data to make sure that the database is as up to date as possible.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister advise how long it takes a new designated officer to get up to full speed? What is the expected duration of that learning process?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that it takes in the range of four to six months for people to feel fully confident and to feel that they have a complete mastery of the work they are expected to be performing.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have heard about concerns for privacy over at the office and understand indeed that a lot of people are obliged really to go down to the office in order to make contact with their officer, for those who can get away. I have heard it said many times that there is a concern that payees or payors and the officers have to meet in the hallway. In fact, I am very familiar with that hallway over there. I am wondering what steps the minister has taken or plans to take to ensure better privacy for people.

Mrs. Vodrey: At the moment that area is undergoing some major renovations on the second floor. The renovations should assist the privacy issue. There will be a private room for interviews. There will be a much larger waiting area which also allows for some privacy. The counters will also have partitions.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am pleased to hear that and I look forward to some positive feedback on that.

As well, there have been concerns about security and the minister alluded to some changes in that regard. I am wondering if there have been any orders issued by Workplace Safety and Health regarding security and what specific measures are being taken to ensure the safety of people working in that office.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that there have been no orders that have come from Workplace Safety. However, we are aware of the security issue and as the renovations are being developed, the officers are being consulted to make sure that their security concerns can be taken into consideration as we are looking at the changes to the second floor.

Mr. Mackintosh: Given the changes in the caseload over the last several months and the changes in staffing, I wonder if the minister has projections for over the next fiscal year to the end of this fiscal year on the caseloads per officer.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that when the new staff are fully trained, the officers are fully trained, we expect the caseload to be in the range of 700 per officer. That is the lowest number caseload per officer across Canada.

Mr. Mackintosh: I will be looking forward to seeing what the actual distribution, in other words, the range is per officer, because I think that can be more telling than averages.

I wonder about the computerization of the orders and the documents. I understand that there had been expectations at one point that the computerization would be completed by now, certainly, I think some time ago. I am wondering where it is at.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that the enhancements are now being tested and that we

expect the new system to be fully operational by the end of the summer.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if there is expected to be a quicker turnaround as a result of the computerization of the office.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I am told that we would expect to see improvement.

* (1500)

Mr. Mackintosh: I simply warn the minister that sometimes a change in technology in an office and new procedures actually results in more work or a greater delay, but I will look forward to seeing the results of that on the understanding that there will be full implementation shortly.

I understand from the Detailed Estimates and responses from the minister to questions in Question Period that an automated voice system is being considered for Manitoba. I am wondering what the status is of that.

Mrs. Vodrey: We will be putting out the request for proposals for the automated voice response system, and we will be looking for those proposals then to give us information so that we can take the next step.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the department have a target date for its implementation?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, our target date for the operation would be the end of '94 or early '95.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the department have a clear plan in mind as to what use the automated voice system will have? Is it expected to simply have the officer's voice on there and messages are left directly with the officer rather than the two front line people, or is there some other plan that is contemplated?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that this is more than simply an answering machine kind of process, but instead, through the automated voice response, the individuals making inquiries should be able to access an updated status of their file. They would be able to access selected information regarding the enforcement action, and they should be able to access this information.

We are looking for it to be operative over 24 hours a day so that individuals are not then just

forced to deal with the office during the hours that a government office would be open but could access information at other times also.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not know what research the department has done on this kind of system for messaging, but I understand the experience in Ontario has been a mixed one. People want to talk to people. Many of the questions are about detailed issues and not the information that is recorded on the voice mail.

I would urge the minister to canvass what is happening in other jurisdictions so that we do not repeat errors here in Manitoba that have been experienced elsewhere. I think that the observation that people want to talk to people will serve to further frustrate people who are trying to make contact with their directors. I am just wondering if the minister can respond to that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that the department did research into this. They looked at the kinds of calls which were coming into the office. I am told that 50 percent of the calls were for information, the kind of information that will be available immediately through the automated voice response system so that people who are just calling to get an update will be able to have that updated information.

What that will allow, then, is that for the other 50 percent of individuals who do have a more complex request or who need some additional kinds of information other than would be available to them on the automated voice response will then have access to the maintenance enforcement officers. So we look for this to be an improvement.

We look for it to satisfy the questions that people have, where they are simple ones, to get that information to them quickly and have it available to them when they want to know the information but also, then, to allow the maintenance enforcement officers to be available to people who are asking for additional kinds of help and information.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Detailed Estimates state that one of the expected results was consultation with community and legal organizations about the enforcement program and obtaining views on how

to improve the system. I am wondering what the minister means by that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that we have two actions, which are, one ongoing and one about to occur. One is that we are sending a questionnaire to the users of the maintenance enforcement system. We will be asking questions regarding the operations of the system and look to get feedback from those people who are users.

Secondly, we are working with Family Law. When we were in the Family Law section I discussed this briefly. Family Law is leading a consultation. They are having discussion with women's groups as well as the legal community to look ahead to change the legislation.

Mr. Mackintosh: In Question Period today I asked the minister what legislation she would be bringing in. Is the minister saying that she will not be bringing in legislation this session? It was my understanding that that would be the case under the throne speech.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, this has always been spoken about as a process. Every answer that I have given to date has spoken about the consultation with women's groups to get a good view of what those changes might be. The changes then to the act will not be brought forward this session, but we do look to get information so that changes may be forthcoming in another session.

Mr. Mackintosh: When does the minister expect the consultations with community groups will begin?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told we expect those to begin in September.

* (1510)

Mr. Mackintosh: If the minister has asked for the users of the system to comment, I hope she is ready for this.

In Question Period today, I asked questions about the backlog in the court and what the department's understanding is of the effect of what is called the Filmon Fridays on that court, the maintenance enforcement court. Could the minister advise what impact is expected?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that as a rule it is usually in the range of four to six weeks for a case to come before a master for these matters.

Generally, the scheduling is in the range of 10 to 12 matters for each docket, and the summer dockets will be commencing one-half hour earlier. So in that case, we have room for 13 to 14 cases, which are more cases than the number 10 which is the usual number of cases heard. So there could be an additional four cases or almost 50 percent.

I am also told that there are still some spots available through July for show-cause hearings. I am told that there is a spot—I have specific dates—on July 7, a spot on July 11, two spots on July 21, three on July 25, and that there are certainly spots available also beginning in August. So it appears that the question of no spots available until latter July, there are in fact some spots available earlier than that, and that this is not an unusual period of time. This is a period of time that I understand is within the range that is quite usual.

I also am told that in looking across Canada, this is a very good time frame. I am told that in British Columbia, the time frame is four to six months. So Manitoba is certainly endeavouring to provide opportunities well before that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I was certainly not pleased to read the memo from Carol Abbott, the Director of Judicial Support, May 20, which set out the reduced workweek. To find Maintenance Enforcement on that list is one area of concern, of course, but I certainly am concerned that the delay is going to worsen considerably. I understand that the—

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: On a point of order, Madam Chair, the member's comments the delay "worsen considerably," that certainly did not come from any facts which I have just put forward and put on the table, so I think the member better clarify what he means and not continue to bring concretely wrong information forward to Manitobans.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: There was no point of order. Of course not. The fact is that there are many, many people who are very concerned about what is going to happen to the delay in maintenance enforcement court as the Filmon Fridays hit, and the reductions on the several dates. That is just a matter of logic, I would suggest.

By simply increasing or starting the sittings at one-thirty and therefore increasing the number of hearings by one or two will not be sufficient, I do not think. That is my opinion, and we will see what happens over the course of the summer, but I certainly have reason for concern.

Finally, I have heard on some occasions, and I think on two occasions that I brought to this House, that the minister's office has not responded as it had advised, in this case, payees that it would. I am wondering if the minister has considered designating a person in her office specifically to deal with complaints about the Maintenance Enforcement office.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, all of the numbers of issues and important concerns that come forward to my office are being dealt with, I believe, in a very efficient way. The staff in my office deal with—and perhaps the member cannot anticipate, but they certainly deal with a very wide range of issues. All of those issues are important, each one of them.

What I can say, however, is that the individual in question phoned, I understand, quite late on Friday afternoon. The individual who took the call was very, very concerned and made every human effort to reply to that call the next working day, which was Monday. However, the information was not available on Monday. It was certainly for no lack of effort, and that individual will be responded to as very quickly as possible.

The individual perhaps now will say, when I have the information, but because my office takes these so very seriously, they have endeavoured to get back to individuals, and we will speak about Maintenance Enforcement specifically, since that is the budget line that we are covering at the moment. They recognize the information as very

important to individuals and have made every effort to respond on the next working day. That is the situation here. It was the next working day in which the call was to be returned.

So I would like to remove any sense from the record that my office simply let the calls from a Manitoban sit there and the concerns of a Manitoban wait. That was certainly not the case. The effort was made to get that information by the very next working day.

Mr. Mackintosh: My final question regarding the Maintenance Enforcement office is what is the position or the policy of the department for overtime of officers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, as I have spoken this afternoon about the introduction of new staff and also the assistance of the three STEP students, we now will be looking at our overtime and also wanting to re-evaluate what overtime is said to be required.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, in the meantime, would the minister advise what the current overtime policy is for the officers?

* (1520)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the policy is, where there is a clear and identified need to look at overtime, then certainly that will be looked at, but I provide those comments with the knowledge and the facts, again, that we have three STEP students. We have now one additional person, and we expect to have another shortly to return us to that complement of two new individuals within the Maintenance Enforcement office.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have some further questions under the line, but I will pass over to the member for Osborne (Ms. McCormick).

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Madam Chair, much has been made about Manitoba's position vis-à-vis other jurisdictions, and the caseload distribution which the minister has indicated puts us in a favourable position when we look at a national comparison. Is the minister aware of a national study that was conducted by Nova Scotia's maintenance enforcement program, which sent out a questionnaire to 12 jurisdictions?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the director is not aware of that study, and if the member has a date of that study, perhaps she could give us the information.

Ms. McCormick: Yes, I am pleased to do this. In fact, there is a response from Manitoba which indicates that someone in the department must have had sufficient knowledge of it to respond. This national survey in fact puts Manitoba, I think, at or close to the bottom with respect to—

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, will the member please give the date of this study?

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. McCormick: I am pleased to put on the record that the information contained in the provincial responses, some of it is current to 1990-91; others include information from years earlier. There are some handwritten notes which indicate 1994 data, particularly for Alberta.

Just to give a capsule summary, British Columbia's maintenance enforcement program indicates they have 110 people on their staff with their caseloads representing about 928 per officer for non-REMO cases and 995 for REMO out. They collected in 1990-91 about \$17 million.

Alberta employs 113 people and has a caseload of 844 per officer and collects approximately \$4 million a month.

The Saskatchewan department employs 22 people, has a caseload per officer of 540 and collects a total of about \$11.4 million a year.

Manitoba, according to this information, employs 20 people and has a caseload of about 1,250 per officer as the average caseload. That is Manitoba's response.

Ontario employs 340 people and they have not—

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member is putting extremely dated information on the record

about this province. I am not concerned about the other provinces. I am concerned about the information put forward about this province. She indicates a study as May 1991. The information I am providing to the House is May '94, and my numbers are quite different than the numbers she is putting on the record.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. McCormick: Yes, Madam Chair, I will raise some questions around Manitoba's position vis-à-vis a comparison between May '94 and May '93 at some point.

If I could just continue with this cross-country analysis. I believe we were at Ontario with 340 staff; Quebec with 223 people employed, they say with persons who have the powers of collector; Nova Scotia 27.5 and again the caseload averaging 744 per officer; New Brunswick employing 45 people and collecting about \$9 million a year in '88-'89-'90 information.

Now, when we come to the smaller jurisdictions, Yukon, employing two people, has a caseload of 400 per officer; Northwest Territories, employing two people, has a caseload of 350 per officer; and Prince Edward Island with two people, again, having caseloads of 510 for the director and 340 for officer.

The only jurisdiction which appears to be worse than Manitoba according to this cross-country check-up is Newfoundland, which has a ratio of 1,600 per officer, although they do make note that they have temporary help that they bring in when the numbers rise.

* (1530)

I am curious, given that when you look at Manitoba's numbers comparing May 1994 with caseloads which appear to be in the 800 to 900 case range, with the exception of REMO-in which has been discussed at about over 1,100 and REMO-out indicating an amount close to 2,000, whether Manitoba in fact is sufficiently resourced to discharge its programs.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the member has now spent a good deal of time putting information that is approximately three to four years stale-dated about other provinces, information about other provinces stale-dated by three to four years, on the record in the Estimates of the Department of Justice in the Province of Manitoba. I see that as the looking backwards, old-think, inability to deal with the facts of today as demonstrated by the member for Osborne (Ms. McCormick). I also think too that if she feels that that information is so important, table it. Put it forward and let us look at what she is saying so we have the full explanation of the figures that she is putting forward.

Madam Chairperson, I am very happy to put some figures on the record now that deal with May '94. These are the current figures. These came from interprovincial comparisons. They speak about Newfoundland with cases per officer of 1,200; Nova Scotia, which the member points to proudly as having done this study, cases of 1,000; Ontario, cases of 1,300; British Columbia, cases of 1,656; and Manitoba with its caseload in the range of 800 in May, which we expect with the additional staff to be reduced to 700. So it does put Manitoba with the up-to-date facts with the up-to-date numbers available which I believe is what the people of Manitoba want to know about.

Do the people of Manitoba want to continually hear facts about other provinces that are so stale-dated, or do they want to know what their position is now? I believe that they want to know now what is the position in Manitoba, and if they would like to know a comparison, what is the comparison for today.

I am very happy to have been able to put that current information on the record.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, I think there is an issue broader than the raw numbers—and we have to look at what happens with respect to the assignment of responsibilities to enforcement officers I think which makes Manitoba's position rather clear. For example, British Columbia employs 110 people: 16 enforcement officers, 17 enforcement assistants,

six enrollment officers, 13 mail inquiry clerks and a variety of other positions, 12.5 legal counsel, six legal secretaries.

Similarly, when you look at other jurisdictions, Alberta employing 113 people have, in addition to their collection officers, 29 support staff who conduct word processing, filing and receptionist duties.

In Saskatchewan, there are 10 enforcement officers backed by another 10 clerical and accounting people plus two management staff.

When you go to Ontario, there are 267 clerks and support staff backing 50 regional enforcement officers, 18 legal counsel and five managers.

We can continue with this, but I think the point is that in Manitoba we have got maintenance enforcement officers with caseloads which you know if the minister wishes to say are favourable to be compared, but we need to find out in questioning what additional resources are put into the maintenance enforcement officer positions to relieve them of some other kinds of duties.

For example, I believe in 1990 there were two positions which were called sheriff's officers whose responsibility it was to locate people. These people worked full time to obtain information on payors which payees could not provide.

My understanding is that these two positions were lost to the department and that these duties of the locators now fall to the enforcement officers. I would like to know whether this is in fact correct information.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member is putting forward comparisons which are really not able to be compared. I am struggling with the point that she is making.

I would say to her that let us look at provinces of perhaps similar size or type. We could look at Saskatchewan. Many times Saskatchewan is referenced in relation to Manitoba. We might look at a Maritime province like Nova Scotia. I would use those to compare cases and caseload: 1,000 per officer in Nova Scotia; 923 in Saskatchewan; 800, we look to have reduced to 700, in Manitoba.

Let us look at the amount of money collected. In Nova Scotia, with cases of 1,000 per officer, a collection of \$19 million. Let us look at Saskatchewan, with cases of 923 per officer, a collection of \$17.9 million. Let us look at Manitoba with 800, reducing to 700 cases, per officer, with a collection of \$31.2 million.

So the member has looked at provinces across Canada, attempted to look at staff of varying job descriptions, but I believe that the number or the issue is in the area of collection, how have we been successful, how are we managing the cases, and I think that these numbers are important.

I can also tell the member, as I look at the information that I have from across Canada, we in Manitoba are the only province where our collected exceeds the arrears. So although she has attempted to paint a picture across Canada of Manitoba in a very negative light, she has not obviously looked into the numbers which give those facts.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, I listened carefully to the minister's answer, awaiting the answer to my question with respect to the sheriff's officers who formerly worked to obtain information on payors.

My understanding is that in 1993 the sheriff's officer positions were terminated and the duties that they were assigned were given to designated officers. The sheriff's officers, I guess, worked about 15 hours a day between the two of them and this is now being absorbed by the designated officers.

Can the minister confirm that these sheriff's officer positions were permanently lost to the department and that the duties were assumed by the designated officers?

Mrs. Vodrey: In the past, I am told that there were three sheriffs whose sole job did the locates for a period of time. Those positions were changed to positions of Maintenance Enforcement officers, who now are able to do a much wider range of function.

I am also told that the Sheriff's Office will in fact still do locates for the Maintenance Enforcement office.

Ms. McCormick: My information indicates that in 1993, there were a total of seven designated officers, and then in the latter part of 1993, it increased to eight, and then in April 1994, it dropped to six. You have indicated in answering questions from the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) that two additional people were hired in May of 1994 and one has since left, so we are back to a status of, in 1994, seven designated officers.

Can you indicate to me how this nets out at an increase of two positions from 1993, where the increase was allowed for a count of eight designated officers?

* (1540)

Mrs. Vodrey: The number of officer positions: '92-93 was seven; '93-94 was 10; '94-95 is 12.

I have explained in terms of the 12 that two were hired, one has since left and so we are looking to replace that second position, and I am told that will be done very, very shortly.

Madam Chairperson: 5.(a) Court Services (1).

Ms. McCormick: I am curious with respect to the designated officers, does the 12 include REMO-in and REMO-out?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, yes, it does.

Ms. McCormick: Does it also include someone who is designated with responsibilities for Provincial Court?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told no.

Ms. McCormick: I think I have a need to identify whether the three STEP students are included in this number.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, they are not.

Ms. McCormick: Does it include two former secretaries who hold the title of designated officer trainees?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, it does.

Ms. McCormick: What is the lag time between when these people are designated as officer

trainees and when they will be carrying a full caseload?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that where people are hired as trainees as opposed to officers—I answered the question about officers being in the range of four to six months before they believe that there is a complete mastery. People hired as trainees do take somewhat longer. They can take into the one-year range. However, I am told that these individuals are doing very well.

Ms. McCormick: I understand that the two secretaries who became designated officer trainees left secretarial positions which have not been replaced. Can the minister confirm this?

Mrs. Vodrey: I think, for the record, there should be some clarification here. The member has referred to individuals as secretaries, had secretaries entered into maintenance enforcement officer training? There were two individuals whom we believe she had referred to as secretaries; they were paralegals. This was discussed under Prosecutions. Those individuals moved from Prosecutions. They moved to the Maintenance Enforcement program. They were paralegals. To say they were not replaced, they in fact—the member obviously was not available when we discussed that line. Crown Attorneys have been hired in Prosecutions.

If the member is referring to secretarial positions which are available within Maintenance Enforcement, not the individuals who have begun training as maintenance enforcement officers but secretarial positions within the Maintenance Enforcement office, those have not been filled because of the movement to the voice automation.

Ms. McCormick: I would like to turn to some questions about the voice-operated system. Is it correct that when the computer system is fully functional, it is expected that designated officers will be producing their own documents, typing their own correspondence and inputting changes on each file as required and that there will be a corresponding elimination of secretarial positions?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I just want to make sure that the member understands the secretarial positions that we are speaking about. There were

two which I believe were referred to as secretaries, who we refer to as paralegals, who came from Prosecutions. They are now maintenance enforcement officers in training. There were two internal secretarial positions within Maintenance Enforcement. Those secretarial positions are being reclassified. They are being reclassified to Clerk of the Court 2. That is because, I am told, as a result of the automation then the maintenance enforcement officers will not require the secretarial support that had been anticipated in the first classification of that secretarial support, which is why those positions are being reclassified.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, are the reclassified secretarial people now with Clerk of the Court 2 included in the 12 count for the designated officers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, they are.

Ms. McCormick: Can the minister advise us what kind of clerical backup now exists? How many secretaries are available to support the officers? What would be the ratio, for example, of officers to secretarial backup?

* (1550)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that there are four secretaries which then are assigned to the 12 officers.

Ms. McCormick: Given that we have a ratio of three officers to one secretary in the present scheme, what is the plan for the ratio once the voice-automated system is in place?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am not able to tell the member at the moment exactly what the required ratio will be with that enhancement. However, I can tell her that there are support staff other than those classified as secretaries who already work within the Maintenance Enforcement area. The functions that these people do will continue to be required. We will have to look at our needs when the voice-automated system comes into place. There are clerical staff in the file room. There are clerical staff in the computer centre. There are clerical staff in the telephone centre as well.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, I have a question now in the area of REMO-out. I have case distribution information from August of '93 compared to May 6, 1994, indicating that the caseload for REMO-out has grown from 825 to in excess of 2,000.

Can you explain how the determination is made to assign 2,000 cases to one or two individuals?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told by the department that their memory of the numbers in the summer of August '93 was in the range of 1,500, so I am not sure of where the member has the 800 number from and it may be helpful for us to know that. However, there has been some growth in the area of REMO-out. As I answered in an earlier answer, the payor is not in Manitoba, so it becomes the responsibility of the other jurisdiction to then provide the collection, and we are not always able to have complete control over how well they will do their own enforcement.

I read over today the amount of money collected in other provinces. It is clear Manitoba does a good job at collecting, at least a good effort at collecting from those people who are here. The numbers, as we looked across Canada, were lower in other jurisdictions.

So I again have to tell the member that we have to rely on the enforcement in another jurisdiction in the REMO-out cases.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, actually it is the REMO-out section that I have had the personal experience with, and I think that it is a problem to assume that there is nothing that Manitoba can do with respect to encouraging enforcement in other jurisdictions.

My own particular order was to be enforced in England. The documents were sent to the Queen's Court in London, and I heard nothing for a very long time. After several attempts to get through to the REMO-out officer, I was told that they had in fact heard from England that the payor was not at the address I had provided to them which in fact was his mother's address and my children were communicating with him on a regular basis at that address.

Without being able to get any detail of this, I asked for the number of the London office and asked them to send to me directly the correspondence upon which they determined that the payor was not at this address and in fact was provided with correspondence straight from London which indicated that he had written back in response to a letter: Dear sir, please advise us if this is your correct address, in his handwriting returned to the British officer making the inquiry: Dear madam, please be advised, this is not my correct address. In the intervening time, of course, once he realized that the order was to be processed in England, he fled the jurisdiction.

My question is this. The information which was transmitted from England back to Canada had arrived in Manitoba several months prior to my obtaining the information directly from England, and it gave the payor sufficient time to flee the jurisdiction.

Is it justifiable to retain caseloads hovering around whatever we want to use, 18 to 2,000, when in fact there is a benefit to timely communication with the recipient?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, you may want to make a ruling on this. I do not know. The member has in her comments provided us with what is likely highly confidential information, information and allegations, allegations made about an individual who is not in this House to defend himself. The member has brought forward details of a case and, again, put information on the record her allegations, as if fact, before this House to remain in the permanent record of this Legislature. I do not know whether there is any ruling to be made on that.

However, I am not able to provide comment on a situation which is brought forward by an individual before this House with allegations. I am not able to at this point confirm anything that the member has said. I would ask the member to remember, please, that our comments are all here forever and ever for the people of Manitoba to read and where there are confidential pieces of information that it would be very important for that to be remembered.

I remember very well the member's speech from the throne in which she wanted to respect individual's rights, in which ethics were an important part. I am having difficulty answering the details of her question with the information available to me.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, I will challenge the minister then to put on the record information with respect to the time lines of the response by the REMO-out officer to recipients, or more awaiting recipients. I would like information on how long it takes this officer with 1,825 in her caseload, or whatever number we are currently using, to respond when information on the status of orders comes from other jurisdictions.

* (1600)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that that information is communicated quickly. There may be exceptions. If there is a particular case of concern, I encourage the member, as I have in all cases, to speak to me, speak to my office, and we will make every effort to assist, but my understanding from the maintenance enforcement office is that that information is communicated as quickly as possible.

Ms. McCormick: I was asking for a time line within which the department would find it acceptable to receive information on the status of an order from another jurisdiction and then communicate it. Is it like a matter of one week, one month, six months? What would be considered to be an acceptable time line?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed the time frame is a week to 10 days.

Ms. McCormick: Can the minister describe the process of when the order is sent to another jurisdiction, is there a period of time within which the status of the order is checked out, or is it simply a matter of awaiting a communication from the receiving jurisdiction?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, there are two parts. The request would go out to the other jurisdiction. We do have to rely on the other jurisdiction to make that contact. If the individual asks us very specifically then to follow up and to find out what the status is within the other jurisdiction, then we

certainly do that. On the other hand, we also, as a regular routine check, at least twice a year on orders where there has not been any action or any response to make sure that the jurisdiction is still making some effort to work on behalf of the payee who resides in Manitoba.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, do I understand that that biannual checking is ongoing, or is there a time where the officers would give up?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, The response I have is we never give up.

Ms. McCormick: What would be your practice, then, to communicate to, for example, myself as a recipient about the efforts being made on my behalf? Would it have been reasonable to expect that this biannual status would have been reported to me twice a year in the intervening four years since I last had contact with Maintenance Enforcement?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said in an earlier answer, and I stand by it, I cannot answer a very personal question that the member puts. I cannot allow Estimates to become so personalized as that. But responding in a very general sense, I can say that jurisdictions often just do not tell us. We make the inquiry, and we do not get information back.

However, if the member is leading up to saying, would it be helpful to let individuals know that every six months or twice yearly there has at least been an inquiry made on their behalf, I think that would be a good idea. That is something that we can certainly look at.

Ms. McCormick: I am interested in learning in terms of the number of increased enrollments that come in to the Maintenance Enforcement Program? Can the minister indicate to us what the month-to-month census indicates with respect to increase in participants in the program?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do not have the statistics calculated month-by-month. We have the statistics calculated year over year. Between '89-90, it was an increase of 5.1 percent; '90-91, an increase of 7.6; '91-92, an increase of 5.1 and '92-93, an increase of 6.1.

* (1610)

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, I have some questions with respect to the growth of this program within the confinements of the space that it is now occupying.

My knowledge of the maintenance enforcement facilities on the second floor of the Woodsworth Building indicate that if a person goes to get information and presents oneself at the wicket, there is no place in which the person wishing to discuss their situation with the designated officer can, in fact, go to have a private meeting.

This has been a matter of some serious concern to people in dealing with the system. The presumption is that it encourages telephone contact and not face-to-face contact. Yet, many women who participated in our consultation said the only way to get action is to go down to the office and just camp out until somebody pays attention to you.

Is there a concern for the adequacy of the physical facility with respect to allowing some privacy for communication between the recipient and the officers who are to enforce the orders on their behalf?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I answered in an earlier answer, we are undertaking renovations for the second floor. We recognize that privacy and also security are issues to be considered. In my earlier answer, I spoke about the renovations including a private interview room, also partitions at the wickets to allow for privacy, larger waiting rooms so that there is also an element of privacy.

So we are working with the maintenance enforcement officers to deal with what are seen as security issues and also privacy issues, and we look to improve the space.

Ms. McCormick: When can we expect these improvements to be a reality?

Mrs. Vodrey: We certainly intend to have these changes made by year-end. I understand that the floor plan is almost completed, but following that, tenders have to go out and there is a process in government for looking at renovations of this type.

Ms. McCormick: Could I have clarification of year-end? Are we talking improvements achieved by the end of the fiscal or the calendar year?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are speaking of the fiscal year at the very latest.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, another area of considerable concern to those who met to discuss the service for maintenance enforcement was the hours in operation. At present, we understand that the hours of operation are 8:30 to 4:30 and that there is very great difficulty in, in fact, connecting with the officer who has responsibility for a specific file.

Has thought been given to expanding the hours of operation to allow for recipients who are employed to have access during out-of-work hours to direct contact with maintenance enforcement staff?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, as the member knows, we are in the process of doing a survey, a questionnaire, to all of the individuals who receive service or are users of the system. So we will have a look at what comes back from that questionnaire and see if there is any indication of a need for change on the side of the payee which the member speaks about. The payee, by and large, provides information about where the payor may be or where the payor may be working, and if those individuals feel that there is a need for other kinds of personal contact at other hours, then that may show itself in a questionnaire.

Ms. McCormick: Perhaps the minister answered this question in an earlier response to the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

Can the minister indicate when this survey will be in the hands of the people who are the registered recipients in maintenance enforcement?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, yes, I believe I indicated August.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, is it intended to be a universal survey or a random selection of recipients?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed it is to be a random selection.

Ms. McCormick: Can the minister give us any indication of what the sample size will be?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I cannot at this time.

Ms. McCormick: Will there be an intention on the department to make the survey's availability known to recipients, for example, through some kind of a media indication that the department is interested in people's opinions, so, for example, a person could phone in and ask for a survey to be sent to them?

Mrs. Vodrey: The basis of the survey was to be random. However, as the member knows, where people have concerns, then we certainly want to know what the concerns are, and nothing precludes people from letting us know what their concerns are or what ideas that they have might be and to make sure that we are able to look at those also.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, I understand then that the answer is affirmative, that if a person wanted to fill in the survey they could phone the department and request that one be sent.

* (1620)

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I do not believe the member understood the answer. What I said was, we will be doing the survey, the questionnaire. That will be done by random sample. However, as in all cases where individuals have issues that they would like to have considered or points they would like to have raised, that those are issues which we certainly are prepared to receive and can be forwarded to us at any time. They do not have to be confined to the time of the survey.

Ms. McCormick: Will the design of this survey and its implementation be done within the department or contracted out to an organization with specialty in this kind of research activity?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that it will be developed within the department.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chair, can you tell me, then, how the sample selection will be determined?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I can only tell the member that it will be random, but I am not able to tell her the mechanics of the sampling at this time.

Ms. McCormick: Can the minister advise what kind of safeguards will be in place to ensure that

only those people whose orders are current or who are not "squeaky wheels" are recipients of the survey?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can only go back to saying that the survey will be random, so we expect that it will be a survey which incorporates concerns from the full range and responses from the full range.

Ms. McCormick: I would like to now ask for some information on the use of federal garnishing orders with respect to the co-operation from Justice Canada, Supply and Services, and then I have some questions specifically with respect to administration fees.

My understanding is that the federal Department of Justice some time ago instituted a \$435 administration fee where a federal enforcement order is in place. Can the minister advise us whether there was an impact on the department, the Maintenance Enforcement Program's operation, when this federal administration fee came into being?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that we do not appear to have an impact because the collection of the fee is from the payor. It is done by the federal government. It does not affect what is owing or paid from our side.

Ms. McCormick: My understanding is that there is a great deal of confusion in this area. For example, where unemployment insurance is garnished, the payor may have not only the amount of the back order garnished but also an additional amount of up to \$435 for the federal administration fee. So the person has lost perhaps what they think is a double hit. Say the person was owed \$435 in arrears and then the administration fee is tacked onto it, so \$900 plus or minus would be taken away. The payor then understands that they have made two payments when in fact they have only made one. Then the payor becomes hostile. The payee does not understand why the money has gone to satisfy the administration fee and not come to the receiving family. So an arrears situation can continue despite the fact that the payor believes that the money has been then paid.

Can you tell me in fact when the administration fee went on, and whether or not the perception that

this is creating a problem by the people who are having difficulties on the receiving end—just got to think my question through here—perceive that in fact there has been an increased problem since this federal administration fee went on?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that this was a federal decision. That it occurred in early 1994, to the best of our knowledge. That the \$435 is payable over five years; that it is generally a payment of \$85 per year for that administrative fee.

Ms. McCormick: The information I have been given indicates that is not the way it is being administered, so I am very willing to go back and check with Justice Canada to see if they are doing it over on a time-payment basis.

The final area that I would like to go into is with respect to the load on the enforcement officers. Can you tell me, by comparison to other aspects of your department whether the staff turnover rate in the Maintenance Enforcement Program is the same as, higher than, or lower than other aspects of the Department of Justice?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that we do not track staffing in that way, though I am told that it seems that when people become officers, they do stay. It is an impression only, but Maintenance Enforcement tells me that it is their impression that the turnover is quite low and that five years appears to be an average.

Ms. McCormick: 5.(a) Court Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,656,600. Shall the item pass?

* (1630)

Mr. Mackintosh: Just one question. The Capital expenditure going to \$95,700, if the minister could just explain what that is for? What the largest area is that is receiving that money?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the 18.5 increase is an increase for the computer related capital purchases for the automated voice.

Madam Chairperson: Item 5. Courts (a) Court Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,656,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,012,400—pass.

5.(b) Winnipeg Courts (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Mackintosh: Who comprises the Family Violence Court Implementation Committee?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I would like to just take a moment to introduce Greg Graceffo to the committee. He is the executive director of Winnipeg Courts.

The implementation committee for the Domestic Violence Court is a committee chaired by the chief judge, and it is her committee. I can tell the member who the representatives from the Department of Justice are on that committee: Bruce Miller, the director of Prosecutions for Winnipeg; Candice Minch who is a policy analyst; and Carol Abbott from Judicial Services.

Mr. Mackintosh: We dealt with this item largely under Prosecutions, I believe. I just have a few other questions. Given the so-called Filmon Fridays, I am wondering what assessment the minister has done as to its impact on the backlog and what steps is the minister taking to deal with the backlog in Family Violence Court.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that cases which were set down on those Fridays were all advanced. There have been no cases which have been put back to September as a result of the workweek reduction days. No trial time has been lost. All of the cases which have been set down have been accommodated and have been accommodated earlier.

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that some court dates have now been made available in October and November. I am wondering where that came from.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that those would be special sittings. Time would have been found available from other sources and has been made available to the Domestic Violence Court.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister aware whether there have been any applications based on the Askov ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Family Violence Court?

Mrs. Vodrey: None that we are aware of.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if the department has considered presentencing assessments of accused in domestic violence sentencing.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if I could ask the member to clarify the question. We are having a little trouble understanding exactly what information he requires.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to take a step back then, is there any presentencing assessment done of persons convicted of domestic violence?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, in looking to answer, I would start by saying that the presentence report is always available. The accused has to ask, and then it is judicially determined case by case.

Mr. Mackintosh: If there is a presentencing assessment, who conducts the assessment?

Mrs. Vodrey: The presentence reports are done by Probation.

Mr. Mackintosh: Final question, I am just wondering of the status of the court monitoring system. Have there been a lot of complaints? I know over the course of implementation of the recording of court proceedings—and I am wondering the status of that program.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that as of May 31, from January '94 to May 31, '94, we have completed 1,224 transcripts. We have 131 left. That is a 90.33 percent completion rate. In May, we transcribed 21,084 pages. It takes us, for a 64-page report, approximately 16 days, and that is a comparison to the previous nine months that it would have taken.

* (1640)

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that the Hearing Officer Program comes under Judicial Services. On that understanding, I am prepared to move from this item.

Mr. Kowalski: I just have a question about transcripts. I noticed that the goal or the objective is to have them within 28 days of receipt of request. Is that 28-day goal, is there a legislation or something, or is that just something that the department has decided is a goal, 28 days?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, it is an internal target. It has been established by the management services internally.

Madam Chairperson: 5.(b) Winnipeg Courts (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$7,348,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,540,900—pass;

5. (c) Regional Courts.

Mr. Mackintosh: We have been putting off the issue of the position at The Pas, and this relates to a question raised by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). I understand that there has been a deletion of a position, or at least in individual laid off, and I am wondering if the minister can explain what took place there.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that an individual was hired as a casual employee with Regional Courts in The Pas, and the casual status was on an if-and-when basis. There was no guarantee of hours. The individual, or the position, was an administrative secretary. There was no staff year in The Pas court office for the position, and the funds to support the casual position came from temporary vacancies in other areas of the province.

Now, we are looking across the province at the kinds of work which needs to be done, and while there may be, and we expect will be, some additional casual time available for The Pas court house, it is not intended for recurring or for regular work, and casual relief may be required for staff vacation and so on.

So the casual position expired June 3, '94, and my understanding is that the individual who filled that casual position was aware of her status and was given both verbal and written notice.

Madam Chairperson: 5.(c) Regional Courts (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,965,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,082,800—pass;

5.(d) Judicial Services.

Mr. Mackintosh: Today I received an Order-in-Council regarding John Enns as provincial judge, and it states in there that he retired to pension effective May 1, 1994. I am wondering if Mr. Enns was one of the individuals who has subscribed to the retirement package

which has been the subject of questions in the House.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, that individual was one of seven.

Mr. Mackintosh: When are the effective dates, then? Is it May 1 for everyone, or are there different dates, and if so, would the minister advise for those dates?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the other six individuals have opted for a July 1 date.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the per diem of \$365.10 per day that is to be paid to Judge Enns the same rate that would be paid to the other six judges?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed the answer is yes and that that represents 1/250th of a judge's annual salary.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is my understanding correct that the seven judges are all coming back on an as-needed basis and will be paid a per diem?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I understand that this is a process which is directed by the chief judge, that those seven individuals will indicate their availability, and then they would enter into a contract with the chief judge, as the chief judge establishes what the need will be.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is there a limit as to how many days per year the judges will be able to work?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I believe, as I have stated to earlier questions, the guaranteed number of days are 80, that judges may in fact take part in. Anything over that number of days is dependent upon the needs of the court, and that is determined by the chief judge.

* (1650)

Mr. Mackintosh: Will these judges be receiving their normal pension beginning on the retirement date?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, they will be drawing a pension from the Civil Service Superannuation Board as of July 1, and the chief judge is cognizant that the amount drawn between the pension and the number of days worked does not exceed the amount of money or salary that a judge would have earned before that judge had retired.

Mr. Mackintosh: Then, on top of that, will the judges be entitled to the one-time package?

Mrs. Vodrey: The one-time window for the retirement of these judges, the one-time window which was accepted, does also allow for one month of salary up to 12 months based on number of years worked, and that would be paid out July 1.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister saying that there will be a one-time lump sum payment on July 1?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, yes, that is correct.

Mr. Mackintosh: Will the minister table the detailed offer that was made to the judges?

Mrs. Vodrey: The offer and the negotiation was spearheaded and led by the Civil Service, and therefore it would be the Civil Service which should provide the details of the offer.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise whether there exists a legal opinion as to the appropriateness of not referring the benefit package to the Legislature in accordance with changes made to The Provincial Court Act a few years ago?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, it is the continued belief of this government that this one-time offer made to the judges was outside of the scope of the legislation. We have discussed in earlier answers, and I have answered on behalf of government in earlier answers, that we believe that this is outside of the scope of the legislation because it is one time and because it is a severance package, and as we look at the legislation, that is not mentioned.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have an objective as to filling these positions?

Mrs. Vodrey: We know that if the seven individuals who are planning to retire are available for their full 80 days, that would be the equivalent of approximately two and a third judges. So we now have to work with the chief judge to determine what she sees as the need, but we have always indicated that we certainly will work closely with the chief judge in making every effort to meet the needs of the court.

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that there are six legally trained magistrates that are called hearing officers who are available and skilled to deal with many matters that are currently dealt with by Provincial Court judges. I am just wondering what the minister's position is as to the use of those hearing officers now to fill the needs of Manitobans in the courts.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the judicial officer work under the purview of the chief judge. She supervises the hearing officers—I am sorry. The chief judge is able to look at how she wishes to use those individuals.

We will be interested in working with the chief judge to look at her assessment of the needs of the court, but I have certainly made that commitment before in this Chamber and to the chief judge. It is our intention that the courts operate as efficiently as possible. We want to make sure that the chief judge is able to express what she sees as the needs to government, and that commitment to work closely with the chief judge remains, but again, as I have said this afternoon, some of the assignment and the assessment of needs falls strictly to the chief judge. She has to make those decisions, and then we have to see what her assessment is. Certainly, we will make every effort to work closely with her.

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

Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—The Misericordia General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, as I had indicated previously, this is a bill which the Liberal caucus had no problems with. In fact, our critic would like to put a few words on the record. But I would have only wished that we would have had this same sort of a co-operative feeling of passing a bill especially when we were dealing with the Grace Hospital, as I am sure some of the individuals would be well aware of.

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise today and speak on second reading on Bill 301, The Misericordia General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act.

Today we have heard in this House from the député de St-Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) commemorating the 150 years of the Grey Nuns in Manitoba. Certainly, religious orders have played an integral role in the development of our province and la Soeurs de la Miséricorde are no exception. Not only have religious orders played a very significant role in the development of Manitoba and certainly in health care, but in particular the sisters here in Manitoba have played a wonderful role in Manitoba, and I am sure they will as we move into the 21st Century.

In 1898, the Sisters of Miséricorde travelled from Montreal, from eastern Canada, to Winnipeg where they decided to open a mission to assist single mothers, and this was in 1898, Mr. Speaker. Those happened to be the beginnings of what is

now, as we know it in the Wolseley constituency, the Misericordia Hospital.

We know that health care over the century has certainly changed very much in Manitoba and certainly in Canada and in the world, and we know that health care as well will change as we move into the 21st Century. Certainly, the ability of technology, the increased number of health professionals, the wide variety of health professionals that are available, and certainly the complex issues, not just medical but social, emotional and psychosocial issues that affect Manitobans today are much different, I am sure, than what those sisters found in 1898.

However, I am sure the one common thing is that in fact people who are in the health care field, what the goal is always, is to provide the best quality of care and service to individuals, to the clients. I am sure in 1898, the sisters, as they do now in service through the Misericordia Hospital, have that same objective in mind, and that is providing care and service to the people of Manitoba.

In 1969, the Misericordia General Hospital became owned and operated by a corporation whose members were then the congregation of the Sisters of the Misericordia. This bill that I am speaking on today, of course, will allow amendments to the original act of 1969 so that there will be a greater degree of flexibility for the board of directors, for the corporation to appoint individuals to the board of directors. Those individuals will not necessarily be sisters but can be lay individuals from the community.

I think these sisters very much see this, as we move into the 21st Century, that it is important that other community members outside of the congregation have an opportunity to provide input and to serve on the board, and this is why they have asked for this particular amendment.

As well, we also note in this particular bill that day-to-day decisions of the board of directors, that there will be more authority given to the executive to provide those day-to-day decision and that all of the decisions do not necessarily have to go back to the corporation for approval. So they are asking for

a greater degree of flexibility in terms of the authority that the executive of the board of directors has.

I certainly, and my Liberal caucus, have no difficulty in supporting this particular bill. We are quite happy to see this particular bill go to the committee stage and look forward to its passage.

I would just like to say in closing that definitely there have been many changes in health care from the days of the mission that was developed for single mothers to what we now see at the Misericordia Hospital, including such programs as ophthalmology, their mental health day programs that they operate and, as well, a brand new program, the Health Promotion Caravan, as well as the many other services and supports that they provide to the community in Winnipeg.

So we do wish the Misericordia Hospital well, and we do support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 301, The Misericordia General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act; *Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le "Misericordia General Hospital."* Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [agreed]

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

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

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

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 205—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): This bill is identical to a bill by the same title introduced by our previous member, our Family Services critic.

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 205, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; *Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille,* be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this bill is identical to our previous Family Services critic, the honourable member for Wellington's (Ms. Barrett). However, we believe there is still a need for this amendment. In fact, when we had this on the Order Paper last year, a very interesting thing happened. We were arguing that if the Children's Advocate made recommendations to the minister, we would never find out what those recommendations were because of course they would be confidential.

* (1710)

A very interesting thing happened. The Children's Advocate wrote a letter to someone, a foster parent, I believe in Thompson, and said that he had made a recommendation to the minister. In fact, it was reported in the Sun on April 23, in an article by Riva Harrison and Dave Rider, and it reported the contents of this letter. So of course we made use of that in Question Period on April 22, and I asked the minister if the Children's Advocate had made recommendations to the minister. The minister was a little bit reluctant to admit it in his first and second question, but finally on the third question the minister said, yes, the Children's Advocate had made recommendations on a number of items.

Normally, we in the opposition would not find that out unless, of course, by happenstance we came across some correspondence from the Children's Advocate. It was actually quite

courageous of the Children's Advocate to put in a letter that he had made recommendations to the minister when, under the legislation, he only reports to the minister. I admire him. I commend the Children's Advocate for having the courage to do that, but we cannot always rely on happenstance. We cannot always rely on letters that are sent to us as opposition critics in order to find out what the recommendations are that the Children's Advocate is making. So, therefore, we believe the act needs to be amended so that the Children's Advocate reports to the Legislative Assembly as does the Ombudsperson, and that way all honourable members will find out what recommendations are being made.

We know that in the past there have been concerns about foster children and foster care rates, and those concerns have continued. In fact, last year we raised concerns about the fact that the rates, I believe, were cut and also the funding to the Foster Family Association was cut, but the main concern was the slash of foster parent fees. This hacking and slashing by this government has continued in this budget, but of course to a much lesser degree because it is a pre-election budget. So, of course, you would not expect as many cuts in a pre-election budget, but nonetheless the cuts continue.

The group that has been the most adversely affected are aboriginal people, because the foster family rates for extended families or relatives have been cut. We got a very interesting fax here from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, saying that currently foster families in Manitoba receive approximately \$20 per day per child. The new policy change will pay \$10.97 for foster parents that care for children who are related to them, and so the rate for relatives or family has been almost cut in half. We have asked questions about this in Question Period as well, because we know that the vast majority of children in foster care who are aboriginal are placed with aboriginal family members. This is a deliberate policy of the department and a good policy and one that we support. Of course, we cannot support the cut in rates because it is going to adversely affect aboriginal families and children.

We have no way of knowing whether someone is raising this with the Children's Advocate and the Children's Advocate is concerned, or whether the Children's Advocate has written a letter to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) and recommended that this be changed. We will probably never know that unless someone leaks some correspondence or unless the Children's Advocate puts that in correspondence to an individual and we happen to get a copy of that.

The other policy change is that a post-adoption registry fee has been assessed, and I believe that fee is \$300, and we believe that that is going to be a great deterrent to families and to children and parents who want to be reunited, because either the parent adopted out a child or the child was an adoptee. Once again, we believe that this is detrimental to aboriginal people because large numbers of their children were adopted off reserve and even out of province and out of country. An end was put to that practice after Judge Kimelman issued his report in which he described this practice as cultural genocide, and so the minister of the day and the government of the day, the NDP Pawley government, put an end to it soon after the report came out. We have no idea whether the Children's Advocate has concerns about the registration fee of \$300. The Children's Advocate may feel that this is discriminating against adoptees who are now searching for their parents, or parents searching for their children. But we probably will not find that out.

People may be complaining to the Children's Advocate and asking the Advocate to intercede on their behalf. He may investigate, and he may write a letter to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), but we probably will not find out if the Advocate makes any recommendations. So all we can do is raise questions in Question Period and tell the Minister of Family Services that we disagree with these policies which we believe most adversely affect aboriginal people.

There are other concerns in the area of Child and Family Services. For example, I have the results of some research done by an individual who looked at the number of children in care and the rate of

children in care and then compared Manitoba with other provinces. I have a chart here that says, interprovincial comparisons of rates of children in care, 1992, adjusted for age differences in legal definitions where appropriate.

The rate for 1,000 under 18 for Manitoba is 15.0. I assume that means that for every 1,000 children under 18 in the province of Manitoba, 15 of them are children in care. If you compare this with all the other provinces, it is the highest of any province in Canada in 1992. The only higher areas were the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. But this is a disgraceful record for the province of Manitoba, and the Children's Advocate may have concerns about this. The Children's Advocate may have been contacted. The Children's Advocate may have had a complaint come to him, and he may have investigated it. We do not know because, once again, the Children's Advocate reports to the minister rather than to the Legislative Assembly.

Another current example is the problems of aboriginal child care agencies and them asking for the province to intervene, and the province took a number of months before they did anything. There may have been individuals who contacted the Children's Advocate for assistance. We do not know. The Children's Advocate may have investigated. We do not know that the Children's Advocate investigated. The Children's Advocate may have made recommendations to the minister, but we will probably never know about those recommendations unless someone sends us a copy of his correspondence. [interjection]

Well, there are problems with never knowing, because these are very important issues. We know, from the many government investigations, that sometimes, occasionally, children's lives are at risk and that occasionally individuals die. That is very tragic. If the Children's Advocate's recommendations could prevent this, it would be extremely helpful and extremely important. We would like to know if the Children's Advocate has made recommendations and, if so, what they are.

The Children's Advocate may be concerned about child poverty in the province of Manitoba. In 1991, Manitoba had the worst rate of child poverty

in Canada or the highest rate of child poverty in Canada, with 26 percent of all children living in poverty. That is 72,000 children in the province of Manitoba. I happened to mention this in Question Period recently, and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) said, oh, no, we are not the child poverty capital of Canada anymore. I believe in Estimates I found out that we have now gone from first to third. That is not because of anything that Manitoba has done. It is not because Manitoba has increased social assistance payments for children and families or improved the Child Related Income Support Program known as CRISP, not because of any of those things, I am quite sure.

I am quite confident that the only reason that Manitoba is third instead of first is because other provinces have lowered their rate of social assistance, most likely the Province of Alberta and I do not know which other province. We will know when the National Council on Welfare issues their poverty profile update for 1993. Then we will know which province reduced their social assistance payments which resulted in Manitoba having the third worst record in Canada instead of the worst record.

Now there may be individuals who contacted the Children's Advocate and said, we want you to investigate the problem of child poverty, or investigate a particular family living in poverty. Someone may allege the amount of social assistance is not enough to keep people sustained at an adequate level. Just yesterday in Question Period I asked the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) about their new policy directive on basic needs.

* (1720)

We know that social assistance is basically a floor. It is part of Canada's social safety net. It could be described as a floor. I believe that now, because of this policy directive, the floor is gone and people in poverty are living in the basement. There is no longer a floor.

In the past we always agreed as a society that it was a good thing that we have people's basic needs met, but because there are no special needs funds,

the basic needs are no longer being met except on a case-by-case basis.

I hope somebody goes to the public interest department of Legal Aid and asks for a Legal Aid certificate and gets Legal Aid to appeal a social assistance decision so that they can go to court and force this government to do what they will not do voluntarily, and that is get rid of this new regressive policy directive.

Before I finish, I hope that the Liberal critic for Family Services will put her remarks on the record so that we know whether the Liberal Party supports this amendment or not.

I would also be very interested in hearing the government's position, but I doubt very much if the government will speak to this. They will, of course, just let it die on the Order Paper because they do not have the moral fortitude to get up and debate private members' bills, and defend the indefensible and tell us where they stand on bills like this. We know that if it ever came to a vote that of course they would vote it down, but the chances of that happening are not very likely.

So with these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude talking about my amendment to The Child and Family Services Act. We still think it is a good amendment. That is why we brought it back this year, and we will keep bringing it back until we get this done and make a progressive change so that all of us know what recommendations the Children's Advocate is making to the Minister of Family Services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you would receive leave of the House to allow on Thursday morning, in the House, Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of the Department of Housing and the

Home Renovations Program, and in the committee Room 255, in the morning on Thursday this week, continuing to consider the Estimates of the Department of Government Services, followed upon completion of the Estimates of Government Services by the Estimates of the Department of Finance. Then should there be time remaining the Department of Highways.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, let us do one committee at a time here. In Room 255, if I recall, leave is already granted to do Government Services after Decentralization.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, what I am requesting is unanimous consent to set aside all other agreements with respect to Estimates and to consider in the House a section of the Committee of Supply, the Department of Housing and the Home Renovations Program; and in Committee Room 255, the continuing Estimates of the Department of Government Services, followed upon their completion, the Department of Finance. Following the completion of the Department of Finance, if time remains, the Department of Highways.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, so is there leave to alter the sequence to allow Thursday morning to bring forward the Department of Housing and the Home Renovations Program? Is there leave for that in the Chamber? Leave? That is agreed.

Now, is there leave to bring forward—I understand we are bringing forward Government Services; upon completion of that Finance, and following that Highways and Transportation in Room 255. That is agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, then I wonder if you would seek unanimous consent of the House for the afternoon of Thursday next to consider in the Chamber the Estimates of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs; and in Committee Room 255, the Department of Labour.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to alter the sequence to allow Thursday next to bring forward in the Chamber, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Thursday afternoon—[interjection] Yes, Thursday afternoon to bring forward Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the Chamber, and the

Department of Labour in the committee room. That is Thursday afternoon next. Leave? That is agreed.

Are we proceeding with Bill 207 (The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail)? No.

Are we proceeding with Bill 210 (The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance)? No.

Are we proceeding with Bill 211 (An Act to amend An Act to Protect the Health of Non-Smokers; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de la santé des non-fumeurs). No.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 21—Health Care Ombudsman

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that

WHEREAS the provincial health care system is large and complex, which may be confusing to citizens when asking and using health care services; and

WHEREAS at a time of crisis, people needing professional health services and caregiving are likely to feel heightened distress and confusion; and

WHEREAS serious criticisms, complaints and problems with the health care delivery system should be reviewed by an impartial third party; and

WHEREAS such as impartial third party may informally resolve difficulties within the health care system and make recommendations to prevent future problems.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recommend to the government that it consider the creation of a Deputy Ombudsman for health care, who would be accountable to the Speaker of the Legislature through the provincial Ombudsman; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly further recommend that the proposed Deputy Ombudsman for health care be authorized

to investigate and report on significant nonmedical criticisms and complaints involving provincial health care facilities and services.

Motion presented.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on this resolution today, because it really deals with two issues that are integral. One is the health care delivery system and how it responds to citizens of Manitoba, and the second is the role of impartial third parties such as the Ombudsman.

We know that the Department of Health and that our health care system in general in Manitoba is a very complex system. Not only do we have institutions and facilities and nonprofit community-based organizations, a myriad of a variety of professionals such as occupational therapists, physicians, nurses, home economists, nutritionists, and the list goes on, we also know that we have a fairly substantive bureaucracy within the Department of Health.

So all of these combined create a very interesting health care delivery system in Manitoba, and we know that our health care system is also fairly complex because of the numbers and types of programs and services that the province of Manitoba offers, because of the nature of technology in this day and age in terms of what is available for people in the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, given all of that and given that it is only natural that there are going to be complaints, criticisms and concerns that are brought forward by the people of Manitoba, we are suggesting in this resolution that in fact there be a Deputy Ombudsman through the Ombudsman's office that would specifically deal with nonmedical complaints and report through the Ombudsman and the provincial Legislature as the Ombudsman now does.

* (1730)

When we look at, for instance, the annual report of the Ombudsman's office, the one that we have received for 1992, it is quite interesting to note that when we go through the 26-some departments that there are in the Province of Manitoba, that when you look at the Department of Health, as an

example, there are over 77 complaints alone that were dealt with through the Ombudsman's office. When you compare the number of complaints and the nature of those complaints in comparison to other departments, Health is enormous in terms of the numbers.

The types of issues that are represented, Mr. Speaker, are from vulnerable persons, for example, people who have mental health difficulties who may be at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, who may be in a psychiatric ward at a hospital, adolescents who have been at the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, individuals who feel that they have not been dealt with appropriately by the Home Care program in the Department of Health, individuals who feel that they have not been dealt with appropriately by a hospital or a personal care home facility.

There are a great many kinds and types of criticisms and complaints and concerns that get reported through the Department of Health, and we are suggesting, because of the nature of the department, because of the number of complaints and because of the complexity of the system, that we would like to designate through the Ombudsman's office a particular person, a Deputy Ombudsman, who would specifically look at the issues that relate to health care in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we had an example this past week where the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), we had made the suggestion, but we are pleased that the Minister of Health also felt that it was necessary to go to the Ombudsman in this case to look at an issue that arose within the Department of Health. As many Manitobans know through the Krever inquiry, there arose some conflicting information, some conflicting testimony between one of the senior members of the Department of Health, that being the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. John Guilfoyle, and the Deputy Minister of Health, Mr. Frank Maynard.

That testimony, because of the conflicting nature of it, has grave implications for Manitobans. That testimony, depending on what we find as a result of this impartial third-party inquiry, may have an impact in terms of Manitobans' ability to

trust the decisions that are made within the Department of Health. Manitobans need to know that if there is an issue that comes up that affects their health, that they know that the right thing will be done within the Department of Health.

I go back to an example of a couple of years ago of the meningitis scare that we had across this country. There were cases of meningitis in some of the eastern provinces in this country, and in fact, there were steps that were taken in those provinces to do some mass immunizations of teenagers in regard to the meningitis.

In Manitoba, we had the officials within the Department of Health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and his staff, who again looked at that issue very carefully and made a decision that in fact in this province we did not need to do mass immunizations regarding meningitis. I know that decision was made looking at a number of factors. A decision was made based on what was best for Manitobans, what was cost effective based on the risk that was involved, and I have every confidence that a Chief Medical Office of Health and staff in the department can make those decisions.

That is why Manitobans have to be able to trust their health care system and, as an example, trust that decisions will be made appropriately. That is why, when we have an issue such as this where we have conflicting testimony and there is concern expressed, there is a cloud of suspicion then a deputy minister perhaps or even higher, that there was a decision made that was in the political interest as opposed to the health interest of Manitobans.

Manitobans need to know that there is an impartial third party that can look into that. In this particular instance, we have the Ombudsman's office. What we are asking for in this resolution is that because of the complex issues in health care and the number of issues that come forward, that in fact we assign, we have a specific Deputy Ombudsman who specifically will look at the health care system.

In Manitoba right now, we know that we are going through an extensive reform process within the Department of Health, within the various institutions in this province and within the nonprofit organizations as well. I think many organizations, as they regularly do, are reviewing their own mandates, their objectives, their goals and their programs to ensure that the services that they are providing are in fact the best kinds of services to meet the needs of Manitobans today and in the future.

So as we go through this extensive reform process, I am sure that there will continue to be criticisms, complaints and concerns that arise in regard to the health care system and the delivery of health care in Manitoba. I make that comment not as a reflection on the present government, but a comment that in fact we always know there will be concerns and criticisms that do occur within departments. Health care is no exception, and in fact health care is very near and dear to people and health care is something that people very much are concerned about. So we know there will be complaints and criticisms, but what we want to ensure that when those complaints and criticisms come forward, that there is a mechanism to deal with those concerns impartially, fairly and expeditiously as well.

Right now the Ombudsman's office has very many issues and complaints that they are investigating, and the time frame for having to deal with those cases and concerns gives rise to concern to a number of Manitobans. The workload is very heavy in the Ombudsman's office. So as we go through this reform process it is going to be very important that people have an avenue.

I know the Minister of Health has announced the creation of an appeal body that will be looking at a number of issues related to health care. One example is appeals for rates in personal care homes. We also will have an appeal mechanism for individuals who feel that they have been unfairly treated by the Home Care Program.

I am pleased to see that the minister has put those in place. The question then will remain, if people feel that, in fact, after that appeal

mechanism they still have not had their issues dealt with, they can still go to the Ombudsman's office. We would suggest that there be a Deputy Ombudsman there so that they, in fact, can get to know a department, get to know a set of issues very well, and that they can handle all of the complex issues of a nonmedical nature that are involved in the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to be in Portage la Prairie this weekend. I was involved in participating in the Manitoba Health Organization rural symposium. It was quite interesting, of course, because the discussion centred around health reform. Of course, during the coffee break and the fresh air break, the individuals oftentimes talked about what was going on in their own communities and the changes that trustees of hospitals and board members were facing in regard to the future of the health care system.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that as we are going through this reform process that the need is ever present, and even more so, the need is there to ensure that Manitobans, whether it is a group of individuals or one single individual, that their issues and complaints will be dealt with fairly.

That is why we are asking for the creation of this health Ombudsman. In this resolution I look forward to comments from the members of government and the official opposition on the creation of a health care Ombudsman. I certainly would be prepared to hear some of the concerns by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). It would be interesting hearing if he sees this as something feasible that we could look into. I know in discussions with the minister in Estimates in terms of trying to set up a system that is transparent to the people of Manitoba, I believe that is what he sees as important. We feel that by creating a health care Ombudsman, it would assist in that transparency process. So I look forward to support for this resolution, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the history of this resolution. It began back in 1988, I understand, from the Liberal Party convention, and then it was put into resolution form and advanced to this House by the

former member for The Maples and was part, I think in a rather quiet way, of the 1988 Liberal campaign. So it certainly has a long history and one that attracted my attention when I was working with patients in the Patients Rights Committee, later the Health Care Consumer Rights Committee of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties.

* (1740)

I think we have to look at mechanisms such as a health care Ombudsman as part of a new era in empowering patients and giving patients redress that apparently do not exist. Back in 1988, when this idea was first brought forward by the Liberal Party in Manitoba, there were not near the level of complaints and concerns about health care in Manitoba, so I think it is even more incumbent on the legislators in Manitoba to now revisit this idea.

I might say, on a preliminary note, that our caucus has introduced The Health Care Reform Accountability Act, and that legislation attempts—well, it will require the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to table quarterly reports regarding health care reform, including budget cuts and bed closures and staff layoffs and community-based services and, as well, will require public meetings so that the public can be involved in the process of health care reform and as well, though, extends the mandate of the Ombudsman to cover health care institutions.

Now, we know that currently the Ombudsman for Manitoba does have authority to deal with complaints from the consumers, the patients in mental health care facilities. It is interesting to note that in the new report we just received from the Ombudsman for the 1993 year, of the 59 complaints received about the Department of Health, 27 were related to psychiatric facilities.

I compare that to the caseload of the Patients' Advocate for the Canadian Mental Health Association. These are two entirely different kinds of functions. The Ombudsman function is very different from an advocacy function, and I want to get into that, but the CMHA advocate, and this is the latest knowledge I have, receives or deals with approximately 80 complaints in any one given

time. We can see quite a discrepancy there, 80 complaints in any one given time versus 27 complaints received by the Ombudsman related to psychiatric facilities.

We certainly know that the CMHA patient advocate is swamped with work, and we certainly know, and I think members on this side know, of the concerns and complaints that patients have currently about health care in Manitoba generally. So I think we have to look beyond simply an Ombudsman function.

The patients in Manitoba need someone on their side. That is not to say that an independent, impartial investigation does not have a role. It has a very important role, and that is why our caucus supports such an initiative, but it must be supplemented by an advocacy office for patients.

I would suggest that at a minimum it should be there to receive and deal with the concerns and complaints of people who are in the psychiatric facilities. I would also suggest nursing homes, but the ideal is that that advocacy office be available to deal with the concerns and complaints of all health care consumers in the province, because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if health care providers do not know from the users how their services are being received, we will never have a truly effective health care system in this province. Even more importantly, the needs and concerns of patients are critical.

It is an absolutely fundamental need of any health care system that not only the physical or the mental challenges of a patient be addressed, but the whole emotional needs be addressed so that the concerns and complaints do not add to the burden on the family and the individual. There must be a response on a moral basis to the needs of patients and consumers.

Of course, in Manitoba, we have had some experiences other than the Canadian Mental Health Association model. We have patient representatives at St. Boniface Hospital and the Health Sciences Centre.

Those programs are very effective. I think it is an important function of those institutions,

particularly the large hospitals, that redress be provided to patients who have concerns and complaints.

Unfortunately, and there is always a balance here, those programs report to the boards of those hospitals, so there is not an independent redress available. That is one thing, of course, the Ombudsman model addresses, but in the advocacy model, we need an independent office.

The Law Reform Commission, back in 1979, and it is unfortunate that it is back that far, in its report on emergency, apprehension, admission and rights of patients under The Mental Health Act, recommended a patient's advocate be available in all psychiatric facilities. Unfortunately, that recommendation has not been put into place, and it is one that should be.

It is not enough, Mr. Speaker, that there be an Ombudsman, and we know the experience of the Ombudsman's office. Depending on the complexity of the issue, it can take quite a bit of time to deal with the complaint and get it resolved, and many of the problems in the health care system, whether that be, my soup is cold, to, why was my surgery postponed or cancelled, need immediate redress. Solutions must be swift. Even within the psychiatric facilities, the complaints are often with regard to whether one is voluntary or involuntary and problems about access to property and those kinds of matters that require quick assistance.

We have seen in Ontario the development of the advocacy office to deal with vulnerable people, to empower them, to provide redress, and I think it is time that legislators in Manitoba looked to that model. Such a model, of course, would need legislation so that there would be access to the facilities, to necessary records and individuals, and penalties would be required for violation of rights of access.

As well, advocacy is needed not just for people who are in institutions but are using community-based services. Advocacy, of course, must be sensitive to the language and cultural values of all the people of Manitoba.

We all have concerns, of course, about health care costs, but as I said earlier, if the providers know from users how services are being received, we will surely have a more efficient and effective health care system. As well, the individuals who are currently in the health care system can devote their time to the duties set out in their job descriptions. We know that many health care professionals are dealing with complaints and concerns throughout their days, and I know they would welcome a service such as an advocacy office.

Of course, the most important concern, the well-being of health care consumers, will be enhanced if their concerns can be voiced and dealt with. Malpractice which is growing—and I understand that Canada is following the trend in the United States whereby, although our malpractice suits are at a lower level per capita than the United States, it is growing at the same rate, although several years behind the United States. So how do we deal with this threat of malpractice? How do we deal with this threat to the professional consumer relationship? How do we deal with the threat of costly legal actions? Well, we have to nip the problems in the bud. We have to nip the complaints in the bud, and that can only be done if there is someone outside of the bed, someone with health, who can deal with all the red tape, who can deal with that very complex, huge black box that we now have as the health care system, who can cut across lines and go to work for the patient and be on the side of the patient.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the legislators should look favourably on the concept of a health care Ombudsman, but never should they stop there. Let us go and consider effective services for patients. The Ombudsman, I think, will only deal with part of the problem, and we have got to move toward effective advocacy services.

Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to take part in the discussion today which I believe is a useful one. Both honourable members, the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) and the member for St.

Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), in various ways are talking about the patient, empowerment and putting the focus on the patient, and I really appreciate that. That is what we need to have in any debate on health care, is a focus where the focus should be.

* (1750)

We are all here representing our fellow Manitobans who are or will be consumers, clients, users, patients, whatever we should call them, but people who use the health care system. I appreciate the honourable sentiments by which the honourable member for Crescentwood is actuated in bringing forward this resolution because I sometimes have the same feelings she does, I am sure, when it comes to a citizen in dealing with a Hydra-headed health care system. It has many, many dimensions, and it has—I am sure there are many mysteries associated with the health care system as far as the ordinary citizen is concerned.

I can understand, as I said, what it is that motivates the honourable member for Crescentwood in bringing forward this resolution. I have a little more trouble with a New Democrat in this day and age talking about empowering patients, as the honourable member for St. Johns has done. I tried to listen to most of the things that he had to say although sometimes my ability to do this is hampered by other things that go on in this Chamber from time to time. I did not hear him talk about what a positive development the self-managed care program in Manitoba is and what an empowering thing that can be. I would have thought that for a member interested in empowerment that we would have heard a lot more from the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) about self-managed care.

I also thought we would have heard more from him in regard to the discharge policy of the various hospitals in Manitoba. He did mention cuts and bed closures and staff layoffs, but he did not mention the fact that technology is making it such that we can have patients discharged from hospitals sooner than in the past. We can have them not even admitted because the nature of their

needs are such that we can look after them through not-for-admission surgery.

The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) often refers to outpatient services being provided at the Brandon Hospital and elsewhere. The member for Brandon East mentions it, but I wish the member for St. Johns would mention that because we are talking about empowerment.

Patients do not like to spend all their time in hospitals if they do not need to, and we are trying to put the patient first. But it disturbs me when we do that—for example, at Seven Oaks Hospital, on a couple of issues lately, we get nothing but criticism from our colleagues in the New Democratic Party for putting the patient first. I think I understand what actuates them, but I do not think the rules of this House allow me to get into a discussion of their motives and so I will not do that.

I do ask the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) to think about a few things in addition to a separate or a Deputy Ombudsman in the area of health care. As a concept, I do not have a problem with what the honourable member is suggesting, because I know what she wants to get at and I want to get at it, too, and that is to empower but also to be accountable. Transparent, I think was the word the honourable member used and I agree with that word. I think it is the right approach, but the suggestion all by itself without more study is problematic from the following points of view.

I do not know to what extent the honourable member has discussed her resolution with, for example, The Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses or the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses or any of the legislatively empowered and sanctioned governing bodies for various professions, and you know we have lots of professionals working in the health system. The honourable member for Crescentwood knows that from her experience, if not from her more recent knowledge.

Certainly her experience tells her that we have all these professionals, each with their own governing bodies, and to the extent that we might create some kind of an overlap or a meshing of responsibilities, that is something that, before we move too far along the line, we would have to work those things out to make sure that we are not getting into territory which traditionally has been occupied by the doctors, the dentists, the pharmacists, the nurses, et cetera, and so forth.

While I have this opportunity to talk about those potential problems that might stand in the way of actually setting up something, I should say a word about the experience of the last few days and then also talk about some of the other options that the public has in addition to or instead of what the honourable member is suggesting.

In recent days, we have indeed referred a matter to the provincial Ombudsman, and I believe that was an appropriate thing to do, because we are basically dealing with—we will find out whether the Ombudsman thinks it was appropriate or whether there is some other avenue we should have followed. Certainly a question mark like the kind that has been raised, is raised, is something that needs to come to a conclusion in that we need to find out whether there is any merit or anything to substantiate the sorts of things that were said last week. So without saying anything more about the details of that matter, it was felt by me and I think by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) and her colleagues and perhaps the NDP as well that that was an appropriate thing to do in all of the circumstances.

We do not maybe always understand or realize all of the services that we have available now, and we do not always use perhaps or maybe the public, and ourselves included, are not aware of the availability of the services that are already there for us.

The member did mention that there are a number of mechanisms available. I will very quickly try to talk about what those mechanisms are. For example, we have a Manitoba Health Board which

has been very useful in recent months dealing with appeals coming from people who feel aggrieved by the charges assessed at personal care homes.

Looking through all of those appeals, I can see that system appears to be working because I see changes in assessments. That is always a good test of an appeal system. Are there any changes or is it just rubber-stamping and no, it is not rubber-stamping. Changes are being made, and I think that is positive.

In fact, I get letters from people who initially had a complaint or a concern to raise, and I get letters that say thank you but my concerns have been appropriately dealt with by this appeal mechanism.

Ultimately, the honourable member mentioned one scenario where, well, what happens when that appeal does not work? I mean, do we go all the way to the Supreme Court? I guess that is the point where we could debate that matter further. I mean how far do you need to go? Is there integrity built into that appeal process and if we are satisfied that there is, then let us use that system and make it work. If there is something wrong with the appeal system, then tell us as a government and then we should respond by fixing whatever it is that is wrong.

Home Care appeals are now possible, and we are trying to do that in a very expeditious and user-friendly, to overuse an expression, way. The Mental Health Review Board is there for people who have concerns with their treatment in our mental health institutions. Hospital boards throughout the province represent the community and are there. As well, a number of hospitals these days are putting into place a position called vice-president or director responsible for patient services, I think it is called, as opposed to director of nursing.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Health will have five minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 21, 1994

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	Nonpolitical Statements
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	Grey Nuns –50th Anniversary
Committee of Supply	Gaudry 3828
Dacquay 3818	McCrae 3830
Oral Questions	Laurendeau 3830
Bell-Wade Report	Chomiak 3830
Chomiak; McCrae 3818	Winnipeg General Strike—Veterans Parade
Burns Committee	Martindale 3831
Ashton; Filmon 3819	Commonwealth Servicewomen—Statue
Winnipeg Jets	McCrae 3831
Edwards; Filmon 3820	ORDERS OF THE DAY
Burns Committee	Committee of Supply
Edwards; Filmon 3821	Decentralization 3832
Goods and Services Tax	Government Services 3848
L. Evans; Stefanson 3821	Justice 3860
Illegal Grain Exports	Private Members' Business
Wowchuk; Enns 3822	Debate on Second Readings—Private Bills
Maintenance Enforcement	Bill 301, Misericordia General Hospital
Mackintosh; Vodrey 3823	Incorporation Amendment Act
Gross Revenue Insurance Plan	Lamoureux 3878
Helwer; Enns 3824	Gray 3878
Child Support Tax Treatment	Second Readings—Public Bills
McCormick; Stefanson 3825	Bill 205, Child and Family Services
Maintenance Enforcement	Amendment Act
McCormick; Vodrey 3825	Martindale 3879
Gasoline Pricing	Proposed Resolutions
Maloway; Ernst 3826	Res. 21, Health Care Ombudsman
Bingo Revenues	Gray 3883
Reid; Ernst 3826	Mackintosh 3885
Winnipeg School Division	McCrae 3887
Plohman; Vodrey; Downey 3827	
Spruce Woods Provincial Forest	
Cerilli; Driedger 3828	