



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 21, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, 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.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1993-94 of the Seizure and Impoundment Registry.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 25—The Real Property
Amendment Act (2)**

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 25, The Real Property Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels, and the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 26—The Liquor Control Amendment Act

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 26, The Liquor Control Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

**Bill 27—The Cattle Producers Association
Amendment Act**

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 27, The Cattle Producers Association Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read for the first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, that leave be given to introduce Bill 27, The Cattle Producers Association Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association des éleveurs de bétail, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. The message has been tabled in the House.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 28—The Statute Law Amendment
(Taxation) Act, 1995**

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice

(Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 28, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1995; Loi de 1995 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have seated today thirty Grade 10 students from Peace Valley School under the direction of Ms. Linda Schell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Pitura).

Also, we have seventeen Grade 6 students from Archwood School under the direction of Mr. Kazina and Miss Adams. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry).

We also have thirty-two Grade 5 students from Lord Roberts Community School under the direction of Mrs. Terry Welsh. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Port of Churchill Management

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister.

Madam Speaker, the Port of Churchill is a vital economic link with the world for Manitoba, and over the last couple of years the volume of grain has decreased in that port.

We have had promises by new governments to ship a million tonnes of grain out of that port. Then we have had recommendations from Ports Canada to close the port down last July, and we have had a task force that was created with a number of recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

Today we have learned, Madam Speaker, that the present port manager of the Port of Churchill, his position has been deleted, and that position will be replaced by an individual who also will hold the responsibilities of managing ports on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

I would like to ask the Premier if he has objected to this decision of the federal government, and, Madam Speaker, how has he objected to that decision?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I was in cabinet all morning and I did not read that news report, but I want to make sure that the Leader of the Opposition knows that this government has been absolutely and totally committed to Churchill, to ensuring that the community, the port operations and everything else go well.

That is why we promoted and eventually got agreement from the federal government to have a national park go in there. That is why we have funded the study by Akjuit Aerospace, to ensure that the rocket range is resurrected and becomes a viable part of Churchill's operations. That is why we did the Arctic Bridge concept studies, so that we could show ways in which that port could be used for two-way haulage of goods, not just be dependent on grain.

But, you know, I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition talks about governments making promises in the past. I was very shocked during the election campaign to read that he had gone up there and promised them that, if he were elected as Premier, he would guarantee a million tonnes of grain would go through Churchill.

He knows full well that is totally outside of his control. He has absolutely no jurisdiction, no opportunity to make that kind of commitment, and he made that kind of dishonest commitment to the public, misleading people all over this province, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, this is on a point of order. It seems to be on a daily basis that I have to rise to remind the Premier of our rules of order, in particular in regard to the statement "dishonest."

I will be prepared to lend my copy of Beauchesne's to the Premier, Madam Speaker, but I am hoping that, short of that, you will ask him to withdraw, once again, another unparliamentary and uncalled-for statement.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, indeed, "dishonest" is an unparliamentary word, has been designated as such by many Speakers and on many occasions.

I would therefore ask the First Minister to withdraw "dishonest."

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I will be happy to withdraw that comment.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I know the Premier is sensitive about his promise on the \$10-million limit to the Jets, but I asked him a very simple question on the Port of Churchill, one which did not require him to go right off the deep end.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba has competed for years, all Manitobans from all political parties have competed for years, with the interests of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Whether it was the Mulroney Conservative government or other successive governments, we have always competed against the vast number of political

interests in eastern Canada that have chosen to ship our grain through the St. Lawrence Seaway to the detriment of a Manitoba port.

As the government indicated in the Speech from the Throne, all members, and I would suspect all members from all political parties, would be interested in what the response of the Premier will be to a decision by the federal government to combine the role of management of the Port of Churchill with an individual who is managing the St. Lawrence Seaway ports. I would like to ask the Premier, what action will he take to stand up for Manitoba and stand up for the Port of Churchill against the federal government's decision?

*(1345)

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat, this government has consistently stood firm for and supported the use of Churchill, the Port of Churchill, and has done significant things to try and enhance the viability of Churchill through things like Akjuit Aerospace, through the Arctic Bridge concept, through the establishment of a national park in Churchill and so on.

But, you know, the members opposite—the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) did it the other day. The member for Concordia, Leader of the Opposition, has done it over and over again, blindly supporting the Canadian Wheat Board and saying, well, you know, they can do no wrong, they are always right, they are the best thing for us.

They have been, time after time, the reason why grain has not gone through Churchill, and grain has gone through St. Lawrence, and there they go, blindly saying, just do everything to support the Canadian Wheat Board, being totally uncritical of it, when it is one of the problems; it is one of the issues.

Why do you not go and talk to the Canadian Wheat Board about its lack of support for Churchill, instead of coming in this House and complaining, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Doer: I asked the Premier to stand up on behalf of the Port of Churchill, and it is a legitimate question.

Does the Premier support the action of the federal government to dismiss the existing position of the port manager at the Port of Churchill and combine the management of the Port of Churchill with the manager who resides and manages a port on the St. Lawrence Seaway, which is a competitive port to the Churchill site?

Does he support that position? If he does not, will he stand up and phone the Prime Minister on behalf of Manitobans and the Port of Churchill, so we can have our own vision in Churchill, working together with all members of this Chamber to try to maximize this port on behalf of all of us, of all parties in this Chamber, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and his party, who blindly and uncritically support the role of the Canadian Wheat Board when it is one of the reasons why Churchill has not been used as extensively as it ought to for shipment of grain—we will not do that. We will go out and do things that are positive for the Port of Churchill, like developing Akjuit Aerospace, like developing a national park there, like ensuring that there are opportunities for backhaul and two-way traffic through the Port of Churchill.

No, Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the decision that has been made by the federal government is the right decision, but I wish that the Leader of the Opposition would wake up and smell the coffee and do the right things by the Port of Churchill, instead of just criticizing all the time and not looking at all sides of the issue.

Port of Churchill Government Strategy

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): My questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

The loss of the port manager of Churchill is a major blow to the community of Churchill and, in fact, northern Manitoba and Manitoba itself. Now, as the Premier indicated, the town has been making a lot of progress with respect to the development of the Akjuit Aerospace project, the Gateway North proposal, to

tourism and other ventures in the community of Churchill.

I would like to ask the Minister of Highways and Transportation what action he and his government are prepared to take in protecting the port, in light of the fact that it will, in effect, become part of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I want to assure the member, as we continually have, that we support Churchill very strongly. In that context, department staff worked very aggressively on the task force for Churchill, which was an initiative to try to develop the economic future of Churchill around import, export, Akjuit, tourism and resupply to the Keewatin district.

We support very strongly the outcome of that committee called Gateway North, and as I said the other day, that proposal they have put forward for an economic opportunity involving the bayline, the port and all the activity through there was sent to the federal government to which we have not got a reply yet.

The action today is not good news from the standpoint of the impact it might have in terms of the enthusiasm that has been developed around the Gateway North project, and we intend to find out from the federal government what they plan to do with the port, because this is not the kind of signal we were looking for.

* (1350)

Mr. Robinson: Given that not a single grain of wheat has been shipped through Churchill at this point and only nine ships went there last year, what assurances does this minister have that Churchill will not be again shortchanged in this coming year?

Mr. Findlay: As the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has pointed out and I did the other day, the Canadian Wheat Board has a high level of responsibility to be sure that sales occur through that port.

In that context, I have talked to the Wheat Board earlier this week, and they have assured me they have

sales on the book to go through Churchill this year, and they are pursuing additional sales, particularly to areas like countries in South America, where there seems to be some economic opportunity for using Churchill.

They have some sales on the book, and I understand they are continuing to work on acquiring more sales through Churchill.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his positive answers to my question.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not he will convene a meeting with the community officials in Churchill, along with other port supporters to discuss a strategy for ensuring that grain is not diverted to the St. Lawrence Seaway instead of through the Port of Churchill.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think interested individuals should be talking to the Canadian Wheat Board, because they are the people who make the grain sales that can be directed through Churchill. They are the individuals we must talk to.

I said I have already talked to them and relayed our strong expectation that they will live up to the Liberal government's commitment of a million tonnes through the Port of Churchill, which they made in the election of 1993. They did not do it last year. We would certainly expect they would live up to that promise this year in 1995.

Manitoba School for the Deaf Relocation

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

The formation of the first Advisory Council for School Leadership at the Manitoba School for the Deaf could have been a significant achievement for this government, but the council at its most recent meeting this week indicated, and I quote: that the process that has taken place within the government to relocate the Manitoba School for the Deaf has left people shocked by the surprise announcement of the relocation, angry at being left out of decisions that affect our children's

future and frustrated with the ongoing process of trying to obtain more information about this decision, only to be met with unanswered questions and lack of response to telephone calls.

I want to ask the Minister of Education to explain why she has treated this first parents' advisory council in such a manner in the months since the Premier (Mr. Filmon) got his election photo opportunity announcing the uprooting of this educational community.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member has made a statement that I think is unjust and ill-founded, and she knows it.

I have had innumerable meetings with parents and others involved with the School for the Deaf. I have had only one phone call that I have not been able to make a return on. I have made a return, left messages on an answering machine, had that call return done—in short, the telephone tag routine—with one person. Every other person who has contacted me from the School for the Deaf has either had a personal meeting or an extended telephone conversation. The last phone call to that one individual was from me to her answering machine, and I am waiting now to see if we can connect, but it has not been from lack of trying.

The member asked me these types of questions in Estimates. I answered them. I think her allegation is unfounded, untrue and unfair.

* (1355)

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister will have the parents to respond to, not just me.

Will the minister make a commitment to meet with this, her first new advisory council, who have no trustees to turn to and whose principal is a direct employee of the department? Will she meet with them as they have requested, before June 28?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member knows, because I also gave her this information in Estimates, that I am quite willing and pleased to meet with any representatives from the School for the Deaf, have met one, two, three

—four meetings already with people from the School for the Deaf, plus with the interpreters meeting a week ago today, plus many telephone conversations, plus constant dialogue with those parents of deaf students who live in my constituency.

So for the member to leave the implication she is trying to leave on the record by saying will I now agree to do something that I have indicated I am quite willing to do—any request that comes to me, my schedule permitting—obviously, if I am tied up in Estimates, I cannot get out to meet with everybody I would like to, but I have always indicated that I will meet at the earliest opportunity.

The request that she is referring to, if she is referring to a formal request that has come in writing, I do not recall seeing a formal request in writing. The parents know, because I have indicated, any time when I am free, I would be more than willing to meet with them because we have so much we want to do together.

Ms. Friesen: My supplementary is to the Premier, to ask the Premier to tell us when he will reply to the April 26 letter of the parents of the school asking that plans to move the School for the Deaf be temporarily suspended until there is consultation with the parents and community members, which, contrary to what the minister has said, has not yet taken place.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I will take that matter under advisement and discuss it with the Minister of Education and Training.

Renovation Analysis

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the real loss in this situation at the School for the Deaf has been the loss of trust in government. The deaf community fears it has been marginalized again, and there is an unavoidable sense that the government got its election press release, the Pan Am Games got a prestige setting in Tuxedo and that the government's commitment to listen to and work with parents mattered very little in the end.

Will the minister tell the House why she has refused to share with parents any information on the study

which evaluated the present School for the Deaf and its prospective renovations?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the member for Wolseley to rephrase the question or, indeed, put a new question. In my opinion, that question was a repeat of a previous question.

Ms. Friesen: The question is indeed different, and it deals with the refusal of a freedom-of-information request from the parents of the school, from the Advisory Council, for the minister to share with parents any information on the study which evaluated the present School for the Deaf and its prospective renovations. They have received a refusal from the minister's department for freedom of information, and I am asking the minister why.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am unaware of any request under Freedom of Information in my department. Those requests will come, I understand, to department officials in various departments, and they will make responses. That request has not come to me. The member leaves an implication on the record that is incorrect.

The member also knows that I have had many lengthy discussions with the parents of the children who attend the School for the Deaf about the relocation which has been under study and under discussion, publicly and informally, for four or five years, Madam Speaker. The member knows absolutely that there are many of those parents in the School for the Deaf—I would say if I counted them up, probably the majority—who are very eager for this new location. Those parents have given that information to me in the many conversations we have had on this topic.

The member is leaving an impression on the record that she has either exaggerated or twisted in such a way to give a false impression to this House.

Alternate Locations

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is to the Minister of Government Services.

I want to ask the minister to table any evaluations conducted by his department for alternative locations for the School for the Deaf.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I will take that question as notice and get back to the member.

* (1400)

Pan Am Games Committee Office Location

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I thank the minister for that, and I wonder if he would, at the same time, table the investigation and the evaluations of alternative locations for the headquarters of the Pan Am Games authority.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I will.

Forest Fires Firefighting Resources

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

I would first like to inform this minister that the facts on equipment shortages in the forest fire situation were ascertained yesterday morning from three of his own officials in three different northern offices. They stated that they were having to pull some fire crews back precisely because of a lack of equipment. One official even commented on equipment shortages to a CBC National News reporter.

I would like to ask the minister, given that in 1989, at times, half of the blazes were still left unattended because of a lack of water bombers and helicopters, whether he is now able to share with us his plans for bringing in more equipment to fight the fires in the North.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I repeat again that we have very qualified people out there who are doing a

tremendous job in terms of jumping at fires and keeping them under control.

I do not for one second accept the fact that there is not enough equipment out there, enough manpower out there, because it changes day to day, and my professional people move it around as it is required, and they are doing a tremendous job out there under very adverse conditions, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Struthers: Will the minister pursue bringing in enough equipment to supply fire crews that are waiting to be called in, given that this would provide relief and assistance to fire crews who have been working around the clock doing a yeoman's job?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, one thing I will say is that it is not my intention, as Minister of Natural Resources, to start running the fire operations. We have people who have done it for many, many years. They know exactly what they are doing, and they are doing a tremendous job, I repeat again, and I will not interfere.

Evacuation Process

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Given that Highway 391 is now closed, can the minister tell the House what contingency plans are in place? For example, is VIA Rail on standby for residents and evacuees should the forest fire situation change near Lynn Lake?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

I will use the opportunity to bring the House up to speed on the situation. In regard to Leaf Rapids, which yesterday was evacuated, approximately one-half the population is now being taken care of and have their temporary home in Thompson with the remainder in The Pas, as well as Lynn Lake. There are teams of people who are working effectively, I think, very effectively together, to try to deal with this situation. It is a horrible situation.

We have right now over 3,000 Manitobans who have been forced from their homes in this province, and I

know that everyone in this House sends their sympathies out to those people who have been evacuated from their homes and are very appreciative of the work that is being done by firefighters in the threatened areas and elsewhere in this province. Right now, today, volunteers are working to make the evacuees welcome. Volunteers are working to assist in the communities that are threatened.

The officials in my department, in Natural Resources, as well as officials of other departments and officials in the host communities, as well as the threatened communities, are all doing their very best to work together to effectively address this problem in a spirit of good teamwork.

A very successful spirit is present in Manitoba, and today I would invite the member opposite to join in that teamwork.

Gaming Commission Research Information

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Yesterday, when we had introduced a matter of urgent public importance, the government House leader put some words on the record for which we would like some clarification.

He questioned the credibility of the work done by Dr. Philippe Syrenne, who was commissioned by the Winnipeg Free Press to undertake an extensive study of the social and economic impact of gambling. The minister referred to Dr. Syrenne as a so-called professor of economics and suggested that the Winnipeg Free Press was politically motivated in publishing a report on Dr. Syrenne's study.

Madam Speaker, my question to the minister is, if the minister has any knowledge of any improprieties in the research done by Dr. Syrenne, will he advise the gambling commission of these concerns, given that they already have consulted extensively with Dr. Syrenne and are using his report as a source of information?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I think, Madam Speaker, that I am entitled to my opinion on these things.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question to the Premier: Is this in fact the government's opinion, that the research work that the gambling committee is now looking at is fundamentally flawed because it was politically motivated?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The member is seeking an opinion. I would ask the member to rephrase his question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, is it government policy that the report that was commissioned and done and which the gambling committee is using as resource information is fundamentally flawed because it was strictly politically motivated, not only from this particular professor but also by the Winnipeg Free Press?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I want to assure the member for Inkster that the Desjardins commission will access all of the information that is presented to them with respect to gaming in this province. Much of it will be simply opinion. Others of it will be research—some better, some worse, some valid, some perhaps not so valid, but they will access all the information that is given to them. That is the purpose of them holding public hearings. That is the purpose of their going out and soliciting any and all views with respect to gaming.

Some of these are just simply views. Some people come to it with a bias. Some people come to it with a predisposed idea of what the conclusions ought to be. Nevertheless, the Desjardins commission will listen to it, will absorb the information and will make their judgments based on all of that information.

* (1410)

Gambling Information Release

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, will the Premier explain why he is prepared to allow

the lottery policy review committee or the gambling committee to release information such as the Clients of the AFM Gambling Program and Callers to the Provincial Problem Gambling Help Line: A Statistical Profile, and the unedited Volberg report, yet not allow elected representatives to have access? Why does he fear making these reports public himself? What fear does he have?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I am tempted to say we have nothing to fear but fear itself, Madam Speaker, but it has been said before.

An Honourable Member: By a much better man than you.

Mr. Filmon: If I did not like the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) so much, I would take offence at that remark. I am considering endorsing her when she runs for leadership, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I have put forward a very legitimate question. I would expect a Premier to answer the question.

If he wants to have dialogue with the member for Wellington, they can feel free after the question to go to the loge and talk.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I, indeed, did recognize the honourable First Minister to respond to the final supplementary question of the member for Inkster.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Well, Madam Speaker, I was actually contemplating endorsing the member for Inkster for leadership of his party, as well, but he better be careful because I may withdraw that support.

Madam Speaker, the issue about the release of reports has to do with whether or not the commission is one that is truly independent, that is truly objective in its point of view, and is not going out there for political reasons. We believe that the commission is. We

believe Mr. Desjardins will present us with information and recommendations upon which the government can act, and it will do so without political interference by us or by anybody else in this province.

We believe that in order to do that, they need access to all sorts of information, information that might be ordinarily barred from publication by The Freedom of Information Act, but in the interests of getting the information that they need in order to arrive at their judgment, we believe it should all be provided to them.

That is what is being done, and they will deal with how they treat the information and what they do with the information, but they are not there as a vehicle to simply support the research of the Liberal Party or any other party in this Legislature.

Health Care System Children's Psychiatric Services

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, we will be meeting later to find out who we will endorse for leadership.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am absolutely positive now that it is the heat, and I would remind all honourable members that it is your time and the clock is running.

The honourable member for Crescentwood, to pose a question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, a young woman in my constituency has had a very serious mental health problem, and the net result of that was attendance at the Emergency department of Children's Hospital on June 2.

The attending psychiatrist said, and this is a quote from the family: If we had an empty bed, we would admit your daughter immediately, but we do not. So take this medication, and we have made an appointment for a psychiatric assessment in two weeks. That is the earliest we can do.

Five days later, Madam Speaker, she was admitted to a medical bed for malnutrition and dehydration.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health, in light of the minister's unequivocal assurances to the honourable member for Kildonan's (Mr. Chomiak) question of May 25, can he explain what happened to this young woman and her family following June 7?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understand everything the honourable member has told me. I do not think he has brought this to my attention before now. If this happened on June 2, and he has known about it, why has he not told me before now?

Each and every time honourable members bring these matters to my attention, and they do arise from time to time, Madam Speaker, when they do arise we address them immediately, and I am wondering why the honourable member waited 19 days to bring it to my attention.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I have written to the minister today on this matter. I received—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Crescentwood, on a supplementary question, no preamble is required or no postamble. The honourable member, to pose his question now.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister now describe the specific steps that he will take to address what is clearly a bed shortage for acutely psychiatrically ill young people in this city?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, working with the mental health community, those people who advocate for mental health patients and clients, families of people affected by mental illness, we have put together a plan which has enjoyed pretty well unanimous support.

When there have been in the past times of pressure on some of the emergency rooms, we have addressed those issues, when they have come forward, by using the swing-bed approach. In other words, there is an ability for us to deal with pressures that are persistent or chronic, and if something needs to be done about it, we do that.

I would be very happy to review the specific case the honourable member has raised, but, I repeat, it is now 19 days, according to the honourable member's date that he gave me, since this has occurred, and we have been through nearly 50 hours of review of the Estimates of the Department of Health. There was ample opportunity for the honourable member to raise this in another, and may I say more effective way.

Mr. Sale: My question for the minister is, will the minister delay the planned closure of this eight-bed ward until he has carried out an adequate assessment of the need for the beds for these young adolescents?

Mr. McCrae: I will not take 19 days to get to the bottom of it, Madam Speaker.

Health Care System Children's Psychiatric Services

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On May 25 of this year, the Minister of Health assured the House that adolescents in need of psychiatric care will get the services they need and will not have to wait in line.

Can the Minister of Health explain why an adolescent is being detained at the Youth Centre where he has been since May 31, a situation that was just recently brought to my attention, because there are no psychiatric beds available?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, if the honourable member wants to bring specifics to my attention, I will make specific inquiries in the particular case he is talking about.

We have a variety of mental health services available for Manitobans today, Madam Speaker, that we did not have before. We are working together with people representing families and representing mental health clients and patients to build a continuum of mental health services that meets the needs.

We do not place all the reliance on the acute-care sector of mental health care delivery, although we know that we need to have some of that capacity, but we also have to have various other methods of delivery of service, things like crisis stabilization centres, things

like youth treatment programs, which have all been put into place in recent months and years, Madam Speaker, something that was never done before.

We are breaking all kinds of new ground here in Manitoba, and we are a model for the rest of this country.

Mr. Martindale: Why has the Minister of Health not provided psychiatric beds, since this adolescent was taken to the Health Sciences Centre, was not admitted, an hour later was taken to the Youth Centre where the staff feel it is an inappropriate place to be keeping him?

Why is there a waiting list for adolescent psychiatric beds?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I answered the honourable member's question last time, and, as I say, if he brings to me specific details, we will make a specific inquiry into the matter.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why he has not fulfilled his commitment to provide the psychiatric beds that are needed. This is not just an individual situation. There are a number of people who are waiting, and there are no facilities available.

Does he think it is humane to keep an adolescent in a holding cell five feet by seven feet with no furniture and the lights on 24 hours a day? How can he countenance this policy?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I am not countenancing anything. What I would like to ensure is that the appropriate services are available when they are needed. Just like the honourable member would like to have, that is what I would like to have, too.

If the honourable member would play the real role of an advocate and bring to my attention in a timely fashion information that I can find useful to help assist in solving problems which do exist from time to time—I would be very pleased if he and his colleague from Crescentwood would move a little more quickly in assisting people who run into difficulties with the health system.

* (1420)

Crow Benefit Elimination Adjustment Fund

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when the federal government announced the end to the Crow benefit, they also announced a \$300-million Crow adjustment fund which we understood was to be used to help farmers who are going to bear the largest burden of this change of transportation, would be used to help them offset their costs. However, we now learn that a good portion will not be going to the farmers.

I want to ask the minister if he has received information and if he can share with us how the \$300-million pool will be divided up.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House and to the member that, following a discussion I had with federal Minister Goodale last Thursday, it was his indication that this \$300-million adjustment fund would be used in significant portions, some \$100 million, for offsetting the specific costs that Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan farmers face as a result of the loss of the pooling formula with regard to the St. Lawrence Seaway, that a further \$40 million to \$45 million would be spent in Alberta for the alfalfa dehy industry and that the remaining portion of some \$140 million to \$150 million would be provided to the provinces for infrastructure support. In his mind, that was principally support for road construction.

Madam Speaker, I hasten to remind the honourable member, this is relatively public knowledge, but it is the federal government's decision to make. He has yet to fine-tune the actual amounts.

My position to the minister was simply that we wanted full compensation for the St. Lawrence Seaway pooling formula loss for certain in this first year, and that amount alone was some \$110 million to \$120 million.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I wish to bring the attention of the House to the fact that I received the concern from the woman in question on Tuesday of this week. I raised it today because her fear was—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the honourable member for Crescentwood's point of order, the honourable member for Crescentwood does not have a point of order.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, there is general agreement to add to the list for sequence of Estimates under Room 254 the following:

Community Support Programs; Employee Benefits and Other Payments; the Canada-Manitoba Enabling Vote; Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities; Allowance for Salary Accruals; Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases; Urban Economic Development Initiatives; Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program—Capital; Emergency Expenditures.

Those are to be added to the list for Room 254, as well, Madam Speaker, as moving Government Services from Room 255 to Room 254 to follow the aforementioned categories.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, would you call for second reading Bill 14, followed by Bill 24.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal Solidarity Day

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Dauphin have leave to revert back to make a non-political statement? [agreed]

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, I rise in this House today to mark the occasion of Aboriginal Solidarity Day, which is today, the 21st of June. Since 1982, June 21 has served as a national day of solidarity for all aboriginal people. It is my wish that all Manitobans, both aboriginal and nonaboriginal, join with me in celebrating the proud history and the unique contributions and sacrifices of our aboriginal brothers and sisters.

As a rookie school teacher on the Norway House reserve I know some of the pressures of life as a minority. At Norway House I was greeted openly and warmly and learned much about aboriginal life. I learned what it takes to survive without many of the basic amenities that most Manitobans have become accustomed to. I learned the value of co-operation, and I learned the benefits of working together toward a common community goal.

Madam Speaker, celebrations marking Aboriginal Solidarity Day began this morning with sunrise ceremonies and will occur throughout this day to remind us not only of aboriginal successes but to highlight the injustices suffered by the original inhabitants of our province. Let all of us today in this House determine our resolve to real justice and equality through such tools as the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs. Finally, I ask that all members join with me and my colleagues on this side of the House in offering our wishes for a productive, successful and memorable Aboriginal Solidarity Day today. Meegwetch. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the

honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 14, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines et les minéraux, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to move for second reading The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, which is intended to update The Mines and Minerals Act, which was proclaimed on April 1, 1992, some three years ago.

The 1992 Mines and Minerals Act was a major rewrite of the former mines act, which was a 70-year-old act that had become both outdated and cumbersome over the past seven decades, primarily due to the many technical and socioeconomic changes that the mining industry and society at large have undergone during this time.

Madam Speaker, I must at this time pay tribute to the work of my colleagues, the honourable minister of industry, trade and technology, who was Minister of Energy and Mines at the time of the passage of the 1992 Mines and Minerals Act, and also to the Honourable Don Orchard, my predecessor, who worked on many of the amendments that I am bringing forward today.

The Mines and Minerals Act embodies many significant features, not only designed to better serve Manitobans but also to afford a higher level of protection to the environment of our day.

As a prime example, this legislation introduced and enshrined the concept of sustainable development within its framework. This is the first mining legislation in North America to do so, a fact in which we can all take a measure of pride.

Since The Mines and Minerals Act was proclaimed in 1992, a number of shortcomings have been identified, many of them of a minor housekeeping nature. It is not unusual when one redrafts a very significant piece of legislation that has been on our books for some 70 years that in the course of doing that

significant rewrite of the act a number of errors or shortcomings will be found in the legislation.

In total, Madam Speaker, some 77 housekeeping amendments are proposed in this current amendment legislation, as well as a further eight more substantive amendments. Covering some 48 sections of the act, the amendments are designed to address these efficiencies by providing some clarity, reducing the opportunity for misinterpretation, providing consistency and simplifying the processes in the act in general.

As an example of the housekeeping amendments, I offer Section 84(2), as an example, wherein the phrase work is "done," the work "done" is proposed to be replaced with the word "performed." It is far better usage of terminology.

For obvious reasons I do not intend to address the other 76 housekeeping amendments in my remarks today. The more substantive amendments, however, eight in number, do need a measure of explanation and a brief summary commenting on the reasons behind them.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker, I would like to go through them at this particular time.

Firstly, Section 4, which provides the authority to issue mineral dispositions, was not proclaimed at the time of the proclamation of the act. Since it was perceived to conflict with The Crown Lands Act, it has now been modified to deal with this particular issue.

Subsection 7(4) is amended to establish December 15 as the date for publication of the departmental annual report. This brings the publication date in line with other departments of government, again an issue of consistency across governmental operations.

Subsection 11(4) is being amended under advice from the ministry of Justice to permit the laying of charges in the case of noncompliance with the act. The present wording as it was discovered does not allow for this, obviously an issue that I am sure all members agree must be addressed.

Section 21 as well, which dealt with conflict of interest, is being deleted in its current form so as to allow the general conflict-of-interest rules of government to apply as opposed to having a special section in this particular legislation, again, consistency of rules across government.

Subsection 127(2) is new and states that a person staking claims on top of a former mineral lease does not assume any liability for rehabilitation of the former lease area if the lease was surrendered or cancelled prior to April 1, 1992.

Subsection 161(d) has been inserted to enable the granting of quarry mineral dispositions on ground already staked as a claim for metallic minerals and vice versa. This was possible under the former mines act and, due to an oversight or omission, was not carried through in the new act.

As members opposite can certainly appreciate, staking a mineral claim or a metallic minerals claim on a piece of property should in no way jeopardize the ability to remove the granting of a quarry mineral disposition on that same piece of property.

Subsection 200(4) has been amended—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have been listening very intently, and I would remind the honourable minister that he should not be referring to specific subsections or clauses of the bill but, indeed, should be speaking to the principles of the bill within the sections contained in the bill.

Mr. Praznik: I intend to be very brief and to the point in my remarks and, if members opposite would grant me the indulgence, since the purpose and intent of this act is to better clarify the working operations of the bill, I have only two further references to refer to. I am sure my critic appreciates the opportunity to zero in on the principles here, and I will be very brief and I would ask for the indulgence of the House.

My reference was to Section 200(4), again keeping within the principle of ensuring that The Mines Act is an easily administrative piece of legislation. This new provision, this amendment, is to provide the minister

with the authority to authorize expenditures from the Quarry Rehabilitation Reserve Account, rather than do so by Order-in-Council which obviously takes more time and is more costly to government administration generally.

Madam Speaker, again, the principle of this bill being one to ensure the administrative efficiency of the general Mines and Minerals Act. The final point I make in respect to the principle is that subsection 243(5) is new and ensures that instruments such as builders' liens or covenants that recorded against levies, leases under the former mines act will be considered recorded under The Mines and Minerals Act. Again, in keeping with the principle of good operation of legislation, this is proposed.

Madam Speaker, I also make the offer to my critic today in the House that I know we will be proceeding with second reading in the fall sitting of the Legislature and that we hope to provide to my critic the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) a copy of the broad sheet, in essence, of all the amendments to this act, all of the housekeeping amendments with the appropriate explanations.

We make our staff available so that she can become conversant with these changes. I trust when it does go to committee, we can have whatever discussions are necessary.

Again, Madam Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is to basically bring the new Mines Act, which was brought forward in 1992 by my predecessor, to a point where it is somewhat more administratively able to perform the functions it was intended, and the experience of the last couple of years in operation with this act have pointed a number of these deficiencies which one could obviously expect in any major rewrite.

I would hope that we will be able to give passage to this legislation in the fall session.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.**Bill 24—The Tobacco Tax
Amendment Act**

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 24, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur le tabac), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, Bill 24 provides the legislative authority to effectively enforce the collection of Manitoba's tobacco tax through the full implementation of a marking and stamping system for cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco.

As members are aware, Manitoba's tobacco tax collection program is being impacted by the potential availability of tax-reduced or untaxed tobacco products from Ontario and other eastern provinces.

Our government has on many occasions expressed concern about the probable consequences of unrestricted access to those tobacco products on the tax revenues of Manitoba and on the long-term health of our citizens, particularly our young Manitobans.

Earlier this year, Manitoba passed regulations implementing a marking system for cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco. The system requires manufacturers to mark the packaging of their products which are to be offered for sale in Manitoba with a gray tear-strip bearing the words "Canada Duty Paid - Manitoba." The purpose of this marking system is to ensure that the tax due to Manitoba on the tobacco is properly accounted for.

Every other Canadian province has found it necessary to introduce such a system for the enforcement of its tobacco tax legislation. When fully implemented, the system will permit the identification of tobacco products brought into the province on which the provincial tax has been collected. Regulations made under the existing act have allowed Manitoba to

impose the marking requirements on manufacturers, wholesalers and licensed retailers.

Further legislative change is required before the marking system can be fully utilized as an enforcement tool to combat tax evasion by unlicensed operators dealing in the underground economy. Bill 24 provides that legislative change.

Madam Speaker, Bill 24 will provide persons who bring into Manitoba cigarettes or fine-cut tobacco marked for sale in other provinces with a process to report, pay and remit the tax and have the tobacco product stamped for consumption in our province.

For the convenience of Manitobans, the process is streamlined. It utilizes readily accessible government facilities where tobacco products can be stamped and the tax can be paid.

There will be no tax payment or stamping requirement for persons bringing one carton of cigarettes or up to 400 grams of fine-cut tobacco into the province.

Madam Speaker, the bill represents a substantial improvement to Manitoba's tobacco tax collection and enforcement process, and I recommend it to all members and to all Manitobans.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (1440)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Madam Speaker, before you call the question on that, I do have some further changes with respect to the Estimates sequence.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to propose additional changes to the sequence of Estimates? Leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Ernst: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Following the Department of Labour in the House, we will have the Estimates of the Legislative Assembly, the Civil Service Commission, the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, the Child and Youth Secretariat, Aboriginal Justice Initiatives, Decentralization. Those are the changes for the House.

In Room 255, following Housing, we will have the Home Renovation Program - Capital. Madam Speaker, those will be the changes to be made. I understand, for instance, under the Department of Justice, they will deal with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in conjunction with that in any event, so we will simply move it up in the Estimates process at the appropriate time or wait until it comes up in terms of approval of the final resolution.

All that being said, Madam Speaker, I had discussions with the Clerk, and he will prepare a new list so that everybody, hopefully, will understand where they are with respect to the Estimates sequence. I apologize for the confusion.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable government House leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Highways and Transportation; the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) in the Chair for the Department of Natural Resources; and the honourable member for St. Norbert

(Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Justice.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Mike Radcliffe): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 254, will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Highways and Transportation. When the committee last sat it had been considering item 2.(e)(1) on page 88 of the Estimates book and on page 43 of the yellow supplement book.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Chair, I will appreciate a little time on a few other issues, road issues in Interlake constituency. From 1990 it was brought to my attention the development of Steep Rock beach area and the community, and I in turn brought it to the attention of the minister at that time of Highways and Transportation the request from the community, the request from the LGD of Grahamdale to put in turning lanes at the corner of Highway 6 and 239 going to Steep Rock.

I want to add the fact that in specifically the last three to four years, the Steep Rock beach development has grown immensely, its weekends and during the week during the summer are basically full, weather permitting. They have really developed it into a tourism industry there.

As a matter of fact, I will also on record make mention that I go there with my family at least two or three times a year. It is a wonderful spot, and at the same time put on record to invite the minister out any time. But it has been on the books, I cannot recall if I have written to this minister, I think I have brought it to his attention or his department's attention.

The last note that I remember is that they would be seriously taking it into consideration, and I would like to ask the minister whether that is in the books coming up and what can we tell the people in Steep Rock?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Chairman, the turning lanes that the honourable member is requesting is about a \$200,000 item to do it. It is not in the program yet, but at that kind of cost it is something that is under consideration but not easy to do. You cannot do it with petty cash. It is a very expensive item. I presume the member is talking about turning lanes on Highway 6 coming from the south.

Mr. Clif Evans: Both ways.

Mr. Findlay: Both ways, from the north and south. All I can say is, it is not on the program yet. We are looking at the traffic numbers. The best time to do a project like that, which is not a large project really, in terms of a contractor, is when the contractor might be in the area for other work. Then you can get it done at a reasonable cost, so his request is recorded, and I am glad that you clarified that you want it from both directions rather than just from the south.

* (1450)

Mr. Clif Evans: Yes, but I would think that most of the traffic going to Steep Rock is coming from the south. Unfortunately or fortunately, there is an enormous amount, and the minister is well aware of big heavy truck traffic going straight through, and it is just after a curve. That intersection comes just after a curve, so it is a turning lane, passing lane, whatever which way you want to call it, so they are aware, and the fear is there. I do not want to be fearmongering, but the fear is there with the increased amount of traffic and promotion that Steep Rock is doing. Hopefully there will not be any problem, but they would certainly like to seek to enhance that corner so that people know they can come onto No. 6 and go off No. 6 going to Steep Rock and be safe.

One comment on that, if I may then, in a couple of weeks when I am out there I will inform the committee and the LGD to proceed with requests from the minister's office on that.

Mr. Chair, 329 again, I hate being repetitious, but I have been repetitious now. This is the fifth Estimates on 329 west rebuilding, upgrading—

An Honourable Member: West of?

Mr. Clif Evans: West of 326. It is a request again from the R.M. of Bifrost. There are many, many bad patches on it. Again, it is one of those east-west connections where folks from Fisher Branch, from Hodgson use that road to come to Riverton, the grain, truck traffic, construction, et cetera. As a matter of fact, through no one's fault at all, prior to election, on behalf of a councillor whose ward most of that section is in—it runs through Bifrost municipality and through the LGD of Fisher municipality up to Highway 17—I had requested an update, and of course because of the election call—so I would like to know if 329 is on the books. What are we looking at? How soon, or do we need resolutions?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, that section from Highway 17 to 233, a stretch of 21.6 kilometres is now undergoing acquisition of right-of-way for future consideration for upgrade; \$130,000 has been set aside for that. That is currently in the program, the acquisition of right-of-way, so the processes have started.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chair, I am sure the minister will be receiving an updated resolution and letters from the R.M. of Bifrost, and I will certainly make sure that the LGD of Fisher also gets involved in it.

Mr. Findlay: We have a previous resolution from the LGD of Fisher, but it would be important that they both come in with similar resolutions supporting what they would like to see done.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chair, knowing the conditions of the road and weather and whatnot, I would also like to put on record to the minister that it is another situation where some maintenance, upgrading, maintenance itself on that road be set aside as perhaps one of the priorities in that area, in that region. Again if things are in the works, we should try and maintain the condition of the road to its best quality, so that if you are going to be making improvements to it, it will not cost as much or take as much effort to do.

I would like, and I have discussed this with the minister, to express my feelings on the importance that

I feel and certainly the communities in the area feel about 513 from Gypsumville to Dauphin River. I know the minister's department has been doing some work on that in the last couple of weeks. I appreciate his response to my inquiry on that and inquiries from the Interlake Tribal Council and the communities of Dauphin River, St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan.

It is a project that has been on the books back in the mid-'80s. It was a project that was begun during the mid-'80s, beginning at Dauphin River Reserve going west. It was taken off the books, everything was stopped as far as continuing. I believe there was some sort of an agreement, some sort of approval to go a certain amount every couple of years, a certain length of upgrading that road.

* (1500)

I would like to say to the minister, and I have said it again that I would more than be willing to go out and get the communities involved to do whatever they can. I have made that request to the communities. I have made that request to the IRTC. The 513 is, at points, dangerous. Its condition at times throughout the year is dangerous. There, of course, have been problems with that road.

It was brought to my attention just last week that a bus full of tourists leaving Dauphin River got stuck right in the middle of the road. I know that there are certain spots that are real soft spots, and that I can certainly appreciate. Not only that, the situation of the curves at certain points, clearing has to be done. Also, the fact that this past year there was a lot of heavy truck traffic, pulpwood truck traffic. Unfortunately, too, the Lake St. Martin flooding situation had to create even further heavy traffic on it.

I feel that the communities are very legitimate in their requests with the upgrading of this road. I am wondering what has to be done. The 513 is not in the books for anything more than just maintenance. What can we do to expedite getting some further work done on that? Really, I would appreciate the minister's department just going out, especially on those curves, and seeing what can be done about some brushing for the corners, the curves.

Yes, the speed on that road perhaps should be cut down at certain times of the year, but because of all the brush on the road and that, a lot of times during the wintertime it gets bogged in with snow that melts. It is not considered a priority road when it comes to snow clearing, and the problems occur from that situation also.

The communities are also fearful of the fact that—and it brought to light the accident that occurred about a month or so ago—not so much the accident as the availability, because of the road condition, of getting medical or ambulance vehicles to the area and out again to go to Ashern, which is the nearest medical facility. It is used. One of the comments made to me by the chief of St. Martin was that they would like to work with the department and say, road counts, do you want to do road counts?

Basically, the department is doing them at the wrong time. I said to the chief, well, what is the right time to do them? He indicated that he and the other chiefs would be more than willing to co-operate with the department in setting it up so that the road counts are a true sense of the amount of traffic that is on that road.

Is there any proposed work, except maintenance, on 513 on the books, or has it been brought to the department's attention for that?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) asked for consideration that the communities get involved when we do road counts. I would have to tell the member that their only reason is they want to get the number up. If we allowed every community in rural Manitoba to do it, they would be no further ahead, everybody would have high counts. It is all relative.

I would have to tell them that the process the department uses is the same all over. They may take counts at a certain time, but in terms of factoring that number to average for the year, weekend traffic activity, tourist traffic activity is taken into consideration in arriving at the number. So my interpretation is a number is relative to any other location in the province because the same process is used.

If they get there and put the counter out at a certain time and then you bias the number, then you have to open the door to every community to do the same and then the reliability of the numbers in a comparative sense just would not be there. I think the department is doing what they should do in that context.

He raised a number of other issues. At this stage 513 is not on any capital program. We are doing the regular maintenance activity. Clearly, this year there were at least two significant frost boil areas, real soft spots in the road, probably one of the places where the bus got stuck, and it was high water, but more particularly water from underneath that was coming up. It was not necessarily the surface water that was causing the trouble. I have to note that at the end of last week the department had been grading it very regularly, more than what would be called the normal standards, so they were responding to the circumstance. I presume they did it.

We are in the process of going to bring in some aggregate to those two frost boil spots to see if they could ridge over the softness of it and improve the quality of the road as a short-term measure because of the moisture coming up from underneath.

Brushing—clearly the department will do brushing if it is deemed at curves the visibility is not what it should be for safety. The snow clearing, the PTHs always get priority. So Highway 6 will always get priority over the PR 513, because the majority of traffic in the area is going up and down Highway 6. In the event of a snowstorm the plows are on No. 6 first; when that is completed they move to the PRs, of which 513 is one of them.

Because of the member's activity, the department is more aware of it. He has brought it to the attention of the department. I think the maintenance crew have responded as best they can in the conditions of spring, but it is Mother Nature who has had a hand in making things probably worse than normal this spring.

The traffic counts on 513 are down as low as a hundred by Anama Bay. I guess that is the east end, right? Over toward Gypsumville, of course, they get higher then, but the part the member is talking about is

really that stretch from Gypsumville all the way to Dauphin River, which is a fairly long stretch.

The department is going through due process in terms of elevating it into the program when they deem it is appropriate in comparison to all the other roads that they give the same consideration to.

Mr. Clif Evans: Would the minister, once we are back in fall session, respond to a meeting when we are back in session if the community so wished to sit down with him?

Mr. Findlay: If the community so wished, yes.

Mr. Clif Evans: Because we did with the previous minister, and we would appreciate that?

Some questions on licence plates—

Mr. Findlay: On which?

Mr. Clif Evans: —licence plates. I have received a couple of letters. I am jumping off the roads into the vehicles. I have received a letter from Lakeshore School Division to you and also from the LGD of Grahamdale to you with a resolution to reinstate front plates.

Mr. Findlay: Front plates?

Mr. Clif Evans: Yes. Can the minister indicate in response?

* (1510)

Mr. Findlay: While the staff is looking up a particular date, I want to remind the member that it was a previous administration, it was the Howard Pawley administration that made the decision, and we are just looking up which year, it was '83 or '85 or '87. They made the decision for financial reasons to have it go with one rear plate only.

I think there is a broad level of support to go back to two licence plates, no doubt about it. It has come from citizens. It has come from law enforcement individuals that we need two licence plates.

That is definitely going to be taken into consideration when we get around to re-issuing a full issue of plates, and now with staggered renewals, you realize, of course, it cannot happen on one day, so, actually, you go through a whole 12-month cycle of licence plate renewal, so how close we are to that I cannot indicate.

I think it is fair to say that the complete issue of the kind of fully reflective plates that we want today is about \$5 million. I think it is about \$2.7 million for one plate and \$5 million for two. Now, we all know the consumer will pay the cost, but I have had nobody say to me that we should have one plate—nobody. All the representation has been like the member said, two plates. It is a recommendation that I personally support, so I think you will see that the government will look at it in a very favourable light in the process of ultimately making a decision on a re-issue.

There is no point in going with a front licence plate on the old plates. A re-issue would be the time to do it. There are a lot of ideas around as to what the plate should look like, about what all it should contain, but I think we need the fully reflectorized plate, so it is visible at a distance, particularly at night. That is a five-million dollar touch, but the cost will eventually be paid by the user, and the user wants two plates.

Mr. Clif Evans: Just quickly on a lighter side of that same topic, I remember and I believe it was after '87 or '86, because I remember that my front licence plate at that time, which we still had to have, was stolen right from my yard to use. The people who stole the licence plate drove all the way to Winnipeg with my licence plate, a personalized licence plate at that, so I can appreciate the other side of it. I do not know how far they got with it.

If the minister can help me with this. I just want some advice, some support and some direction with this matter. I have a matter where a consumer has addressed the fact that he purchased a used automobile from a dealer and has basically gone through a lot of problems because of it. I have brought it to the attention of certain people. I had another case like this about six months ago, not from the same dealer, but we really got nowhere with the other issue, and we are getting nowhere with this issue, according to the

constituent's call this morning again, asking me if I have brought it to anybody's attention.

* (1520)

He indicated to me that it seemed strange that the department or the part of the department that deals with these issues is, as he calls it, going after another dealership or garage that sold the car, yet they seem to be backing off in doing what he feels is required on a larger dealership; in other words, two sets of rules.

I would like to get this settled. Who in the minister's department would be best suited to sit down with me, go over the file that I have and deal with this, because I understand that as of July 1, we have our new legislation in, and, really, I would like some direction from the minister as to whom I would speak to.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Findlay: You are referring to a car that was purchased from a dealer, and the car did not live up to expectations or something of that order?

Mr. Clif Evans: Yes, it had the safety thing on it from the dealership itself, and he found out that this was wrong.

Mr. Findlay: This was from a licensed dealer?

Mr. Clif Evans: Yes.

Mr. Findlay: And it had a safety certificate?

Mr. Clif Evans: Their own, yes.

Mr. Findlay: I would direct the member to Mr. Dan Coyle, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. He would be the appropriate individual to work through.

Mr. Clif Evans: I thank the minister for that, and on the previous issue, I had gotten in touch with Mr. Coyle, and he, of course, passed it on to the appropriate area, but the consumer, the constituent, was not happy with the end result. I do not want to see the same thing happening with this, so I will be speaking with Mr. Coyle, and I would hope that the department can get

more seriously involved on this. The constituent feels he is being railroaded, basically. I have just one last question with respect to beavers, the Queen's own beavers, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) calls them. At the Interlake constituency, you go in certain areas—

Mr. Findlay: They have infiltrated the province.

Mr. Clif Evans: Oh, for sure, like zebra mussels. Does the minister's department have a specific amount of monies made available for beaver control, a beaver fund?

Mr. Findlay: Give me the right verb, would you?

Mr. Clif Evans: What do you want done with them? First of all, I would like to know whether the Highways department has in its different regions any funds put away or on the side for beaver control on the highways.

Mr. Findlay: Well, clearly, I think the member just used the soft word, control of beavers, and he knows full well control means removing them.

We call in trappers to remove them, and we pay \$30 an animal, and then, of course, they get the pelt value of the animal, so as part of Maintenance, staff decide where they become a problem and get a trapper to come in, usually a registered professional individual who does the trapping.

Mr. Clif Evans: So there is no specific fund then for that? It is just part of the Maintenance Program?

Mr. Findlay: It is part of Maintenance. I think the member knows there used to be 300,000 beaver, and there is now one for every citizen, over a million, so they are surviving very nicely, thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(e) Regional Offices (1) Eastern Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): We will try and speed it up a little bit, Mr. Minister. I do have a letter from a group representing the PTH No. 59 upgrading committee, and I have just one question on it.

Their last paragraph in the letter states, the people of southeastern Manitoba understand the financial pressures government is faced with. They have also done research on the relative safety, use and future importance of PTH 59 as compared to other roads. They know this project deserves priority attention and will not take kindly to funds being allocated to highway construction in other parts of the province where the facts do not demonstrate the same level of priority. We would like to be assured that this project is on top of the Highways agenda.

Now, I am not in the habit of speaking for southern Manitoba, but is it on top of the Highways agenda?

Mr. Findlay: I think the member for Flin Flon can appreciate that everybody who wants a highway built can write the same kind of letter, and I want mine at the top, but we clearly recognize the importance of that road. There is an awful lot of commuting traffic in and out of the city there, an awful lot of lanes on 259 and some curves there. It is a dangerous stretch. It is a high-traffic-volume stretch.

At this point in time, the project that we have in front of us is about 15, 16 kilometres from the Perimeter going south to I believe it is 210. Where we are at right now is last fall's program we approved the building of the approaches for the bridge. Because of wet weather the contract did not get going, but the approval is there.

In this spring's program the approval is there for building the bridge, which I would expect would occur over the next winter, and we have just finished expropriation of the last piece of property between the floodway and the Perimeter. That stretch is about three kilometres, and we have approved the funds for grading of that portion.

So from the Perimeter south, grading is committed, bridge abutments are committed, the bridge is committed. So a major component, I believe it is about \$6 million—the total commitment in terms of dollars right now is about \$9 million for the components I mentioned. The overall expected cost of the whole project is over \$60 million, so a sixth of it is committed. It is going to be done in stages because of the high cost.

Mr. Jennissen: I am not sure if this will speed things up, Mr. Minister, but I am willing to sort of pass everything we have talked about until we get to the Northern Region Office 15.2 (e)(5).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2. Highways and Transportation Programs (e) Regional Offices (1) Eastern Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,080,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$504,500—pass.

(2) South Central Regional Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,926,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$561,000—pass.

(3) South Western Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,879,000—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$469,000—pass.

(4) West Central Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,488,100—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$333,200—pass.

(5) Northern Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,181,900.

Mr. Jennissen: I have a whole series of questions. One of them is on the Moose Lake road 384. I just talked with the chief who happened to be in about an hour or two ago. I am not sure if this is confidential. It is an economic assessment. It says preliminary for discussion purposes only. He had only a very brief chance to talk with me about it but basically wanted me to ask some questions on that particular road 384.

I guess one of his concerns was that there seemed to be very heavy emphasis on the economic aspect of it and people were sort of being ignored. Is there some comment on that?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, the members were asking why it is focusing on economics. It was simply because the Moose Lake community—basically the Moose Lake Loggers came with Repap saying they wanted to build that stretch of road connecting 285 across to 384, basically a new stretch of road, and have it built to a TAC standard for the hauling of logs from the Moose Lake area. It meant building a new stretch

of road and upgrading a fairly good section of 384 so they could handle the loads of logs that Moose Lake Loggers wanted to be moving to Repap. So they initiated the study which the department has done.

The whole focus from the outset was for the economics of the area, for the job opportunities of being able to supply timber to Repap from that region and to have a shorter route to get there and have a road that was built to handle the loads that they wanted to haul. It was a joint initiative by Moose Lake and Repap in concert that caused that to come together.

Mr. Jennissen: But the rest of the road from Moose Lake going down by the airport and bypassing that new leg, are there any plans for upgrading that? They are talking about ruts and a lot of dust, and there are some serious concerns about that. Is there anything new in the works?

Mr. Findlay: Which stretch are you—

Mr. Jennissen: Not the new stretch to the mill, but 384 itself.

Mr. Findlay: I would have to answer the member that, no, there are no upgrade reconstruction considerations right now on the books. It is just the maintenance of the road which is generally deemed to be not that bad of a gravel road. It does receive, because it is a long gravel road, the passing strip dust control sections of three kilometres every 16. Dust control is done at the Moose Lake community at the Moose Lake end of the road. So it gets its normal level of maintenance by the department standard.

Mr. Jennissen: Actually what I was going to ask was about the dust control because I do travel that road a fair bit or used to when I worked there off and on. Dust seemed to be a serious problem and a lot of washboard as well.

Mr. Findlay: When there is washboard, I mean that is an maintenance issue. It has to be graded and graded regularly, and then of course the speed of the traffic.

Mr. Jennissen: I would like to ask about some other northern roads. Some of my colleagues perhaps would

have asked them if they were here, but they are not at the moment.

Just maybe an update on what is happening to the Norway House 373 and Cross Lake 374. I know there are sections in there in the spring that really get bad. Can you update me a little bit on future plans for that road?

* (1530)

Mr. Findlay: There is a stretch of 373, the first 12 kilometres east of Highway 6 right at—for lack of a better—the north end of 373 that is scheduled this year for grade and gravel, a million and a half dollars, 12.4 kilometres.

There is another stretch that would be north of Jenpeg halfway between Jenpeg and Wabowden. There are spot grade improvements at the cost of \$250,000 that was in this year's spring program which hopefully will be done this summer. In this spring's program for probably doing next year is grade and gravel for \$1.9 million on the next 12.4 kilometres towards Wabowden.

This year we are doing the first 12.4 kilometres from Highway 6, and already programmed but likely to be done next year is the next 12.4 kilometres to take it all the way to Wabowden. There is another stretch down at the Norway House end, the Rossville junction; 11.2 kilometres has been approved for acquisition of right-of-way. So at both ends and in the middle there is work proceeding.

Mr. Jennissen: And 374 at Cross Lake?

Mr. Findlay: I am sorry, I said Wabowden; I should have said Sipiwesk junction. When I said 12.4 kilometres this year and 12.4 kilometres programmed for next year, it is to Sipiwesk junction. I misread the map.

Mr. Jennissen: On the Cross Lake road 374 there is nothing new?

Mr. Findlay: Just regular maintenance is scheduled for 374.

Mr. Jennissen: I used to travel to Cross Lake a fair bit, and one of the things I always wondered about is why there is no bridge there. Is that ever in a long-range sort of plan, or has it ever been considered?

Mr. Findlay: A bridge at Cross Lake?

Mr. Jennissen: Yes.

Mr. Findlay: I think I just found out the answer. It is a \$10 million cost, so it is a very big cost. That is the No. 1 reason.

Mr. Jennissen: And that same applies then to Norway House? Taking that ferry there it looks like it would be feasible to put a bridge there.

Mr. Findlay: The cost of the bridge at Sea Falls is \$5 million—hefty items.

Mr. Jennissen: On No. 280 to Gillam, any updates on that?

* (1540)

Mr. Findlay: On 280 from 391 to I guess it is called the Kettle Rapids area there, there is nothing but maintenance scheduled on 280. On 280 to Gillam, that portion is currently surfaced. We are spending \$925,000 and Hydro is spending one and a half million dollars to do some repaving and some sealcoating, so there is a redoing of the surface of that road in co-operation between us and Hydro, with Hydro paying the majority of the cost. That has already been tendered, and the tender has been let, so it should happen this year.

Mr. Jennissen: So there are some shared costs with Hydro then.

Mr. Findlay: Yes.

Mr. Jennissen: Okay, now the question I have: Is that also the case then, let us say, with Repap? Does Repap also kick in money, because obviously they are heavy road users, and I would assume that with the agreement that was made with Repap they would pay some portion of the road maintenance.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, we have negotiated a cost-sharing activity with Repap on the bridge at the Pasquia River on 283 west of The Pas. The total cost of the bridge and the associated grade and gravel is \$800,000. They are paying a third of it, paying a third of the \$800,000. They had initially come forward to have this project included in the infrastructure program, which was not accepted in that process, so we ended up paying two-thirds, and they are paying a third of the cost of the reconstruction on that bridge.

Mr. Jennissen: Is that all that Repap pays then? Are there no other agreements?

Mr. Findlay: There are no other agreements with them at this stage, no.

Mr. Jennissen: One of the comments I hear from a lot of northerners is that those big pulp trucks are pounding our roads all to hell, pardon the language, but we, the taxpayers, end up paying for the roads. That is one of the concerns. Now, that may be a misconception I would like the minister to clarify.

Mr. Findlay: Well, all those big trucks pay for licences, which comes into general revenue, which is part of our incoming revenue. They pay fuel tax, the company pays tax, and anybody who works for them pays tax, so in the whole activity of Repap a lot of tax is paid and vehicle licences are paid and fuel tax is paid, all of which comes into general revenue.

So there in the process of normally doing business, they are contributing to the pot that goes to pay for roads, but wherever possible, I can assure the member, we try to strike a cost-sharing agreement that we can get them to agree to.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, the next road that I would like to deal with is probably one the minister would rather not deal with. A lot of us have some concerns about that 391. That is the road—

An Honourable Member: Surprise, surprise.

Mr. Jennissen: That is the one from Thompson to Leaf Rapids going by Nelson House and then to Lynn Lake.

Mr. Findlay: The member, I am sure, is aware that in '93 a project was started south of Leaf Rapids, 37 kilometres of base and AST which was completed in '94. From that point on to Nelson House, there are some 99 kilometres which has surveying and design going on. There is spot grade improvements, clearing and grubbing and additional gravel, for a total cost of \$550,000. So there is an awful lot of gravel going to go on that 99 kilometres. It will happen this year. Not all of the 550 in terms of the clearing and grubbing will happen this year, but the gravel will happen.

In a project just east of Nelson House for a 16.8-kilometre stretch on 391, base and AST, \$750,000. Smook Bros. are the contractors, and they are currently underway.

Approved in the spring program of this year, which will happen next year, is grade and gravel for \$3.3 million on a 15-kilometre stretch on 391, and it is approximately 35 kilometres west of 280. I am moving down from the North, working south. So we have base and AST; we have 99 kilometres of gravel. We have 16 kilometres of base and AST happening now and another 15 kilometres of grade and gravel programmed that will happen next year.

An awful lot is happening on the vast majority of that road.

Mr. Jennissen: Did the minister say that spring amount was \$3 million?

Mr. Findlay: The 99-kilometre stretch is \$550,000, the gravel; and the grade and gravel is \$3.3 million, which is programmed now but will be done next year.

Mr. Jennissen: The concern that I always get when I get to Leaf Rapids, of course, is: Have I driven the road? I have to tell them that I drove the road because that is how I get in there, and they just feel that that road is not up to snuff at any point, especially in the spring. That is when people get stuck, and that is when ambulances cannot get through.

There have been numerous complaints and committees, I think, especially spearheaded by Mrs. Barbara Bloodworth, but there is a whole group in the

North that wants 391 upgraded, and I would like to go back to that group and say that is definitely happening.

They still, I think, assume that it is just cosmetic, that it is not any serious attempt to fix that road.

Mr. Findlay: It is definitely not cosmetic dollars. This is real commitment, and I think the member knows that I drove that road with staff—

Mr. Jennissen: Partway.

Mr. Findlay: The majority of it, from one end, then from the other end. It requires more gravel; there is no question about that. It requires probably significant maintenance to keep it in shape. We met with them, and I think their level of expectation over the course of the meetings they had with staff and myself, probably the level of demand did come down to something that was affordable. We responded with affordable volumes of money here to address the road and try to keep it in a better driving standard year round.

Mr. Jennissen: Would the minister honour that committee by driving to Leaf Rapids in the spring when it is at its worst?

* (1550)

Mr. Findlay: You know, 24 hours a day, I have a lot of roads I might have to drive in the province. Every spring somebody has a real problem. Some people said I should come out and bring my canoe with me to travel their road this spring. There is no question in this province, the weather conditions we get that are unpredictable, that it is tough for staff to build and respond to keep the roads in perfect driving shape.

I commit that they do the best they can, and we are limited to how much funds we have. We are trying to allocate something to help everybody everywhere on an ongoing basis. I am not going to say it is going to be perfect. You cannot promise that. I do not think, if that member was a minister, he could promise it either. There are limitations all the time. We are always trying to maximize what you can do in terms of capital upgrade but, more particularly, in terms of constant maintenance to keep it in good shape. But there will

undoubtedly always be periods of time when we cannot meet the commitment we would like to have made. It is a never-ending challenge.

In the staff that I met with and talked to up there, I came away with a comfort zone, that they really were committed to doing the job to the best of their capabilities, given the conditions they had to work with. We cannot change the conditions overnight. Some of the amenities of the North, the freedom of the openness and the rough and tough of it.

I want to remind the member, and I think I did earlier, that a lot of these roads were thrown in quickly. They were not built to an adequate standard; they were built to what is referred to as a pioneer standard, and now we are caught trying to catch up to get them into a standard, a very expensive cost to get them up to a standard we would all like them to be.

Mr. Jennissen: I certainly want to assure the minister that we are used to the rough and tough of it up there, especially when we drive to Lynn Lake, and that is the section—I guess it is still 391—that I would like to talk about or ask about. That was paved at one time, but it is really breaking down now. Signs are saying bumps ahead, next 74 kilometres. It has to be a world record. I am just wondering, are there any plans in the works to fix that?

Mr. Findlay: Starting at the Lynn Lake end we have bituminous pavement, 1977, for a stretch of—a fair stretch anyway. The next stretch is AST, in 1980, and there is a third stretch that gets you to Leaf Rapids which is bituminous pavement, 1975. There was a good surface there at one time, but there are areas there where you are over permafrost, and when you put a black ribbon on top of permafrost it draws a bit of heat. It does cause some problems with the movement of the road and the stability of the road, and there are a lot of big trucks travel over that road for commercial reasons. So those are tough conditions in which to build a road.

The ADM just reminded me that on that stretch of 280 up by Gillam that we are doing with Hydro, there is some experimental work going to happen there with heat exchange pipes to keep the permafrost permanently frozen, and they are heat pipes produced

by a company in Elie. If they are successful in the experiment there they could be a bit of a solution to help maintain this road, keep the permafrost permanently frozen. So the experiment is being done there. I have talked to those people about the pipes, and they feel they work well. They are selling them all over the world and in provinces west of here where they say they work well. The cost of them has come down quite a bit over the last number of years, so we hope the experiment works on 280. It could be applied in other areas in the North where similar permafrost conditions exist under the road.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Jennissen: Just to get back to those heat pipes for a second, are they the same ones that they were talking about possibly using in the bayline?

Mr. Findlay: Exactly the same ones, yes, and there is a test stretch on Highway 6 south of Thompson currently occurring. It is the same principle.

Mr. Jennissen: Would we have any idea as to cost in terms of stabilizing a section of road, a mile, let us say?

* (1600)

Mr. Findlay: The test section on Highway 6 at Joey Lake, they really were cost prohibitive, and the reason for the further experiment on 280 is to see if they will work in a design that is more cost affordable in the future.

As I said earlier, we met with the people from Arctic Foundations, and they tended to convince us that the future cost compared to the cost of three or four years ago will be much more affordable for us. So there will be a technology that can be used, and, certainly, we are really interested relative to the bayline as to whether they could be a means of stabilizing that line.

Mr. Jennissen: So we do not have a ballpark figure on how far those costs have come down so we could use it economically for the bayline.

Mr. Findlay: Not at this time, no.

Mr. Jennissen: Continuing with 391 again, the section they call the South Bay road is also fairly rough, fairly bumpy. That has been upgraded or is in the process of being upgraded from Leaf to where the ferry—

An Honourable Member: To South Indian Lake?

Mr. Jennissen: Yes.

Mr. Findlay: In last spring's program, we approved an environmental assessment survey and design for a 22-kilometre stretch which extends the existing road around the north side of South Bay toward South Indian Lake. There has been a request—I think it is part of the Northern Flood Agreement—that there be a road built, an extra 22 kilometres built, where we have approved an environmental assessment survey and design this past spring.

Mr. Jennissen: But there is no upgrading then of the first section of it right to the bay.

Mr. Findlay: Not at this time, no.

Mr. Jennissen: The new section being proposed to go around and then tie in to South Indian Lake, is there some connection with, like you were saying, the Flood Agreement and the fact that there is treaty land entitlement process on? Will the province be paid some money by the feds for this road or for a possible bridge?

Mr. Findlay: Although it is part of the Northern Flood Agreement, the cost has been left to us 100 percent, as the Department of Highways.

Mr. Jennissen: I raised this question earlier with the minister of when those road contracts will eventually be tendered. I guess the people of South Indian Lake really felt that they would like to be part of that. There is such great unemployment there. The fishing industry is not going well because the subsidies have been cut back for freshwater fish, the transport and so on, and I guess they really want jobs. I know there is no direct affirmative action plan for companies, but they certainly would like to be kept in mind if there are jobs over there. They have made that specific request to me, so I will just pass that on to you.

Mr. Findlay: When I was in Leaf Rapids, they were there, and they made the same request and commented the same as I did to you earlier. I mean our mission is get the road built to our specs at the lowest cost. Certainly, they have an opportunity to bid or get subcontract work or do the smaller projects on construction orders that the department does. There are ways and means of which they can get work. We just cannot guarantee it.

Mr. Jennissen: I would like to switch over now to the Sherridon road from Highway 10 to Sherridon-Cold Lake. That is a very winding, narrow road, and the concerns that some of the residents of Sherridon and Cold Lake have expressed were concerns such as they need more brush clearance along the side of the road because visibility is poor. I know there had been some brush clearing last year. Is there expected to be more this year?

Mr. Findlay: Under the previously approved, we have spot grade improvements on 75 kilometres, and I can tell the member we met with the mayor of Sherridon three or four months ago, something like that, and talked about the need for some improvements, plus we have some money in the previously approved budget for brushing along the 55-kilometre stretch, again another component that they requested, thought was important to do. Brushing and spot grade improvements are both in the previously approved portion of the program, and it seemed to meet the immediate urgent request of the mayor when we met with him, I think it was, back in February or March.

(The Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Jennissen: There have been a series of serious accidents on that road because pulp trucks use it and so on, and it is fairly rough and narrow and winding. One point that people from Cold Lake and Sherridon keep bringing up over and over again is, could that road be upgraded in status, let us say, a designated road? Is that a possibility in the near future?

* (1610)

Mr. Findlay: Well, it is currently a main market road. It was initially roughed in as a pioneer trail and now is

being expected to serve much greater needs or uses than it was ever initially intended for. We are strapped to the wall to meet our demands on the existing designated roads. Because we were in trouble, we turned back 2,000 kilometres and still have not heard the last of it.

To start adding to the network now, it would have to be a tremendously justified case. It is difficult to be able to do that at this time, I have to tell the member to be very honest with him.

Mr. Jennissen: Could I ask the minister, and this is more in the nature of a long-range vision, and I know it is a bit off the wall perhaps even, but are there any studies that could give me some idea of the cost if there were to be a road, let us say, from south of Lynn Lake, Fox Lake Mine to the furthest point north from Sherridon, probably around Kississing Lake, I would think? That stretch is about 100-150 kilometres.

Mr. Findlay: When I look at the map, I can see why people would want a road through there, that kind of a connection from Lynn Lake all the way to Flin Flon. It is some 300 kilometres approximately, and the grade and gravel and the appropriate bridges that would be needed, \$250 million. So every time we ask for figures on roads or bridges anywhere in this province, it just scares you.

I mean, the construction industry would love that kind of job, but the taxpayer would be a long time paying for it. So it is a long distance, and it is very expensive.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, I realize that. I had not thought it was that big a distance, though. I am going now by as far as we go by Kississing Lake road past Sherridon, not right from Flin Flon, and I thought it more in the nature of 150 kilometres.

I know it cannot be done right now, but I would just point out to the minister that somewhere in the future, though, in terms of tourism, if we had that round road, I think we could pull an enormous number of tourists up north. It would just make things so much simpler. I know it cannot be done now, but, if you had a 20-year sort of span, you could do a little bit each year.

Mr. Findlay: The other part of the equation, I would remind the member, if you even proposed that, can you imagine the environmental assessment harangue we would go through trying to get approval for the route? It would be a long process. It is not easy today, although maybe getting the money might be the easier part than getting the public approval through the environmental approval process.

But when you look at the map, for a commercial activity, for tourism, for citizen movement, it would be a very, very good route. I know it is an area—the construction industry would love that kind of injection into their industry.

Mr. Jennissen: Well, I was also thinking at it from the point of view of access of people to roads, specifically Pukatawagan and Granville Lake, and since they are either reserves or about to become reserves, I was hoping the feds would throw in lots of money, but it does not appear to be the case.

Mr. Findlay: They are more broke than we are.

Mr. Jennissen: So I would like to just talk in general now, over all those regions, not just the northern region, that is, the number of vacancies, and are they being filled?

Mr. Findlay: In the total in the department or in the regions?

Mr. Jennissen: In each of the regions, because I did not do that for each specific region.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, I will give the member, by the five regions, the total number of SYs and the number of vacancies.

Region 1, 53 SYs, three vacancies; Region 2, 49 SYs, four vacancies; Region 3, 46 SYs, two vacancies; Region 4, 37 SYs, seven vacancies; Region 5, 28 SYs, six vacancies.

In Region 5, in Thompson, we have had several mechanics resign because they have taken jobs with Inco, being offered higher salaries. So it is a bit of an

anomaly in Thompson because better salaries are being offered by Inco, and we lost quite a few staff.

Mr. Jennissen: In Region 4, seven vacancies out of 37 seems very high. Are they planned to be filled?

Mr. Findlay: In all cases the department fills according to need. You mentioned Region 4, three of the positions are in the process of being filled, three out of the seven at this time.

That is not saying that the rest will not be filled in due course, but they will be filled according to identified need.

Mr. Jennissen: I would like to just switch a little bit to statistics here on highway construction expenditures in the North versus the provincial total. I am hoping that these figures are accurate. I think they are accurate.

In 1981-82, out of the total budget, the North was getting 21.9 percent, and a decade later by 1991-92, it was 5.7 percent. Can the minister explain why this trend exists? There might have been good reasons for it, but I would like to hear them because northerners labour under the assumption, rightly or wrongly, that they are being shortchanged in terms of the total road dollars available to them.

Mr. Findlay: There is a little bit more history to those figures than just what you see on paper there comparing percentages and different periods of time.

Back in the early '80s there was a lot of federal cost-sharing going on, a lot of federal money coming in, a lot of roads being built. The federal component is also in those figures. The Gillam road, Hydro contributed a fair bit, as they are to the reconstruction I mentioned earlier. Both federal dollars are there and Hydro dollars are there. We would have to do a bit of homework to determine the actual amount in those figures that was just provincial government.

When you get down to today's figures, the '91 figures, you are looking at just provincial dollars. The federal government does not have any dollars in there.

Just recently we got some contributions from Hydro on Highway 280 at Gillam.

They are a little misleading because there was a bit of a boom time going on and federal dollars were flowing in. If federal dollars would flow in again or Repap dollars or Inco dollars or anybody to lessen our burden we would be very interested in trying to do more without the taxpayers of Manitoba having to share every dollar of cost.

Mr. Jennissen: To get back to Repap dollars, I am just wondering when the contract was signed with Repap why that was not written in so that Repap would be obligated to share road costs, because they are obviously heavy road users.

Mr. Findlay: Repap, the agreement was signed a few years ago. Clearly, the value of pulp dropped significantly, and they were not financially able to meet all their commitments in terms of what they had proposed to do. I guess it is fair to say the value of pulp is now getting back to be a little more attractive, and the discussions with them do continue.

Mr. Jennissen: I have the estimated expenditures 1994-95, so those figures might not be totally accurate. If they are accurate based on a \$190 million provincial road construction—this year I think it is more like \$111 million and the North is \$5,714,000 that would make it 5.2 percent of those figures are accurate. That would be the lowest, I think, of possibly all the years. Am I correct on those figures?

Mr. Findlay: Well, figures do not lie. I told the member earlier the other day that in the spring program this past year the North received \$7.7 million out of \$52 million, I believe it was, of the total spring program which is roughly 14 to 15 percent of the total expenditures of the spring program of '95-96 in the North. That is responding to the issues we are doing on 391 and 373 and Highway 6 and Highway 280.

Mr. Jennissen: If these figures are correct though it would indicate a gradual lessening of our proportion of the money and it would be difficult to sell to northerners. You know we are getting a little bit less and less of that road budget every year, proportionately,

and yet tremendous wealth comes out of the North with the hydro, pulp, the minerals, and we pay the taxes and so on. The northerners do not believe this is a fair formula I guess is what I am saying, and I am wondering if we can get the minister to admit that or to change the formula.

Mr. Findlay: I would just like the member to go back and read the letter he just read to me from Highway 59. Therein lies the answer. Everybody says we are the priority, and Highway 59 people said the only priority of the province should be to spend everything on us for the next year to get it done and exclude everything else. We cannot do that. We have to try to address every region of the province, every year.

We have identified a higher portion of the last spring program to the North, given the weather-related circumstances of last year which were rather phenomenal. It caused road degradation that we responded to as we will in any region that encounters the kind of circumstances that Mother Nature sometimes causes us to have to deal with.

In Swan River, after the flood of I believe it was '89, a lot of bridges and roads were rebuilt there to respond to the urgency that happened there. I think our cost in there was something like \$6 million or something in that area.

We do what we can with scarce resources. That is the way it has always been. Do not forget to remind people that Hydro and the federal government had a lot of dollars in those figures of 10 and 15 years ago.

Mr. Jennissen: I guess when you are comparing 391 to 59 the difference probably is, if you live in a community along 59 you must have some other roads, probably three or four or five other roads. If you live in Leaf Rapids you only have 391. That is the only way you can get out. If it is springtime and you lose the bottom of your car, your muffler for sure, you do not have much choice.

* (1620)

Mr. Findlay: I would just ask the member to help us when he is talking to people from Highway 59 to

remind them that there is 391 up north and, in fairness, we are trying to deal with them all.

An Honourable Member: Is this an invitation to the rubber chicken circuit?

* (1630)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would like the member for Flin Flon and the honourable minister to just give me an opportunity to get into that discussion, although I cannot. I have a few things to say on Highway 59, too.

An Honourable Member: You are excluded from the discussion.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I think the minister and I have had a number of those discussions.

Mr. Jennissen: I think we could talk on northern roads probably for five hours if we had the time. I would just, I think, draw this to a close.

There is one other thing. Someone just handed this to me about 10 minutes ago and it is not with the North at all, but if I could bring it up, it is a constituent matter. Basically, it deals with a Mr. Neil McArthur who lives just north of Winnipeg Beach, approximately one and three-quarters to two miles on the east side.

The Department of Highways has expropriated a portion of his land and has agreed to pay Mr. McArthur some \$16,900 for that chunk of land. This agreement was struck as far back as 1993. To date, he has not been paid, and now the construction crews want to start removing his tall spruce trees in his yard. He is concerned that he has not been paid and claims he will not let the crews onto his land until he receives payment.

I envision the gentleman standing there with a shotgun. I do not know, but could you check on this?

Mr. Findlay: Give me the location again, the name and the location.

Mr. Jennissen: The gentleman's name was Mr. Neil McArthur, and it is just north of Winnipeg Beach, approximately one and three-quarters to two miles on the east side. That is all the information I have.

Mr. Findlay: Well, land purchases are done by the Land Acquisition branch of Government Services, although when they are not successful in negotiating a purchase, the expropriation is eventually signed by this minister.

But the cheque should have been issued. We will follow up to see if there is any reason why it was not. If the cheque was not issued, that would mean there is some unresolved component. Naturally, we cannot be moving on to a piece of property to do construction unless all the legal components are looked after in terms of acquisition of the property, and that ultimately means paying for it.

We will inquire through Government Services what has not happened here that is supposed to have happened.

Mr. Jennissen: I actually have no further questions for this section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2. Highways and Transportation Programs (e) Regional Offices (5) Northern Region Office (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,181,900—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$325,000—pass.

Item 2.(f) Winter Roads (Recoverable from Canada: \$515,000) \$2,575,000.

Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute recess and leave the clock running? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:24 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:32 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(f) Winter Roads (Recoverable from Canada: \$515,000) \$2,575,000.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, on Winter Roads, I am taking a look at two years ago, and there seems to be quite a drastic cut. I noticed, I believe it was 1993, the Estimates refer to \$3,575,000. That is down by about a million dollars. Would you comment on that, please?

Mr. Findlay: The department has done exactly the same network of roads. The cost figure is down by a million dollars. What the department found is, and they were doing a lot of tendering as well as negotiated contracts, and they found that the tendered contracts were much lower than the negotiated ones.

So the department is in the process of trying to bring the negotiated contracts more in line with the contracts that are tendered, so we get exactly the same network of winter roads done at a lower cost to the taxpayer of Manitoba.

There is no question that last year was a tough year for winter roads because it was so mild in the winter. It took a long time to get some of the roads in, and I think maybe one or two roads may not have been able to have been brought to full ice depth even when the season was at its coldest, and then the season of use was shortened up because it was not long till things started to warm up again in the beginning of March. Last year was a really tough year for getting the roads in for the length of time that the people that haul goods are used to being able to use the roads.

The same network was done. The reason for the difference of cost is simply the difference between negotiated and tendered contracts.

Mr. Jennissen: It is one of the Activity Identifications—or pardon me, one of the objectives is hauling of freight and a maximized creation of local employment opportunities. That is very laudable but is there not a third factor like people moving?

Whenever I see a winter road, for example, to Pukatawagan the people are just waiting to be able to get out to buy cheaper groceries so that must obviously be an objective as well or is that not the original intent?

Mr. Findlay: The original reason for the winter road—it is still the primary reason—is to haul goods in, to get them into the communities to serve over the next nine or 10 months, whether it is fuel or whatever it is, whether it is for the community or whether it is for Hydro or for telephone, to bring those commodities in at much lower cost obviously than alternate ways of getting the supplies in.

A secondary benefit, not for which the winter road project was initially intended, is the ability of citizens to get out of the community and drive to wherever. It is a secondary benefit but clearly in terms of use of the road, it is a rising level of use, a significant rising level of use.

Mr. Jennissen: Do the same rules apply in the sense that they apply to provincial roads? If I said, a private vehicle is on a winter road, I am not sure what the rules and the regulations are—no stop signs obviously.

Mr. Findlay: The reason I was laughing is the member does not really realize the kettle of fish he is starting to open up here, because the use of the road is increasing by vehicles from those isolated communities and there is a concern for safety on the roads, speeds and all that sort of thing.

We had given consideration to bringing in under The Highway Traffic Act that the rules of the road should apply. Well, there was strong objection amongst the First Nations communities for us doing that, so we have not done it—might prefer that it be done, but they wanted the freedom.

Mr. Jennissen: Does that do anything to insurance if you have an accident on that stretch of road? Does that impact it at all?

Mr. Findlay: To the best of our knowledge, MPIC has honoured any claims for vehicles that are registered, that are licensed, but many of those vehicles operate unlicensed, unregistered, because in the isolated community they do not need to be. If people license and register their vehicles, then they will be, as far as we know, covered by MPIC, but even though I say not by law that the rules of the road apply, we would hope that responsibly they do apply but if push comes to

shove, they are not included in The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Jennissen: Regarding contracts for private roads, what was last year's contract for Norwin? They had a contract.

* (1640)

Mr. Findlay: Norwin draws funds from, as far as we know, two directions, one from us; \$650,000 was paid to them last year. They also draw an amount of money we do not know about from SERDAC, which receives their money from the federal government. So we have paid them \$650,000. We presume it is half of the cost, but we do not know how much SERDAC paid them.

Mr. Jennissen: Now, is there a set operating season with winter roads? Pardon my ignorance. Is there a date set, or do you just go by the weather?

Mr. Findlay: Generally speaking, there are approximate dates. I think, approximately, they might be open from six to eight weeks, but it is very dependent upon weather. I mean, we have engineers or staff people out there who measure the depth of the ice, and, of course, you have to have a certain amount of cold weather. You get the snow off. You flood water to get the depth of the ice up where you deem it now safe for different weights of vehicles to travel over it.

Last year, would be the shortest period, I think, in a long, long time of actual use. It took a long time to get some of the roads in, and, then, as I said earlier, they did not last as long as the normal six- to eight-week period. I think some of them might have been as short as two to three weeks. Staff is saying, even though they might have been open, some were not up to full weight capacity. They did not have the adequate depth of ice for safety.

Mr. Jennissen: I think that is about all I have for winter roads, but I think my honourable colleague here may have a few questions, if you do not mind.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Chairperson, in the last budget Estimates process, I had raised the issue with the minister with respect to the winter road system

connecting Split Lake and York Landing and what I consider to be a roller coaster ride or deplorable conditions of the road. At that time, I had asked the minister if there had been any negotiations between department officials and Manitoba Hydro officials to try and resolve this type of winter road network that links those communities with the outside world.

I had thought at that time, if I recall correctly, that there may have been some discussions taking place. Perhaps the minister can clarify for me if, indeed, there are discussions taking place.

Is Manitoba Hydro going to be participating in any upgrading of that winter road network, that portion of it, since it is my understanding that the winter roads have to run through muskeg and bush country because there is fluctuation in the water levels on the lake, where the winter roads had previously run in prior years.

So is Hydro playing a role in this process now to upgrade those winter road systems, and is the department planning or contemplating upgrading that road link between Split Lake and York Landing?

Mr. Findlay: Just for clarification, you are referring to upgrading the existing route that is on land, like in terms of levelling the terrain. Yes, okay.

No discussions have taken place with Hydro that has led to any commitment from them to do any work on levelling the terrain. The member mentioned that the levels of the water has precluded being out where it might be more level, and Hydro, you say, indicating Hydro has, in your mind, some responsibility to improve the levelness of the terrain on which the winter road is built, but no discussion has led to that sort of conclusion.

Mr. Reid: Well, I guess I have been wrongly under the assumption then that it was the mandate of the Department of Highways to try and upgrade or improve highway conditions throughout the province whenever and wherever possible. I must say, if there has been no negotiations between the department and Manitoba Hydro to try and impress upon them the onus on Hydro's part, at least from my understanding of

circumstances the responsibility that they have, I think the department has not fulfilled part of its mandate to try and improve those conditions.

That is one of the reasons why I raised it last year when I was the critic. I have personally travelled over that road. I know the minister's staff, at least some of them, and maybe even the minister himself, have travelled over that road. But if the minister has not, I recommend you take a trip on that winter road when it is open during its season because you will be appalled at the conditions at which people have to travel.

I can frankly tell you I do not know how any of the semitruck traffic can negotiate some of those curves and some of those hills that are on that road network system, and yet that is the vital link to the outside world that York Landing has in particular.

If there is any way that steps can be taken to initiate the discussions with Manitoba Hydro to impress upon them that there is some responsibility on their part—I know looking at some of the legislation before the House now with respect to the Split Lake legislation that we have before the Chamber now—maybe this is something that the minister can talk to his colleague responsible for Northern and Native Affairs to have him take that as part of the negotiations as well.

Maybe that is another avenue that the minister can explore to try and include that upgrading of that road as part of the conditions of settlement.

Mr. Findlay: I thank the member for his input. Yes, that might be a fruitful opportunity to get Hydro to understand they might have some responsibility here given that they caused the location of the winter road to be moved because of activities they are involved in. Although we have not achieved anything yet it does not mean we will not try in the future. There might be some opportunity because of the negotiations that are ongoing to have that included.

* (1650)

Mr. Reid: Last year I believe, I think it was the Shamattawa band council was at least, I will use the term "sabre-rattling"—maybe it is out of context

here—talking about imposing toll roads on the link to their community. Has that issue been resolved to this point?

Mr. Findlay: This last year the department negotiated a 50-50 contract with Shamattawa for the building of the road. So the issues of the past, the threatening of a toll road, did not materialize.

The department got the road done for \$177,000. It was a much better job than in the past and Shamattawa built the road, and I think also used another contractor in the process. A good road was built; 50-50 cost-sharing, no more talk of toll road.

Mr. Jennissen: I was wondering if I could get a breakdown on the cost of construction for winter roads with regard to it being provincial and federal component and a third party whatever that may be, a reserve I presume or Hydro?

Mr. Findlay: Cost per kilometre?

Mr. Jennissen: I am just wondering how much? If this was total dollars, how much would the province pay, how much does the federal pay and who is that third party, and how much do they pay?

Mr. Findlay: Of the total winter road expenditure of \$2.575 million, \$245,000 is 100 percent provincial winter road cost. That leaves \$2.3 million that is shareable with Canada and third parties, and the recoverable from Canada in that sharing agreement is \$515,000. The recoverable from Shamattawa was another \$88,000, half of the contract cost.

Mr. Jennissen: There is a road from Sherridon or near Sherridon to Pukatawagan—a winter road. Right?

Mr. Findlay: Yes.

Mr. Jennissen: I wonder if you could give me how long that road is and who serviced that contract last year, sort of a dollar figure.

Mr. Findlay: The cost?

Mr. Jennissen: The cost and also the length of it.

Mr. Findlay: There are two stretches of road in that area, one from Fay Lake junction to Kississing Lake, 28 kilometres, \$12,000 cost, and then the big stretch the rest of the way, 77 kilometres, \$101,000, so total length is 115 kilometres and \$113,000.

Mr. Jennissen: Was that handled by a local contractor, like Pukatawagan or Sherridon, that area?

Mr. Findlay: The smaller section, the first section I gave him, the 28 kilometres, was done by Ottavia Budai, contractor.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, I know him, locally.

Mr. Findlay: —and Pukatawagan Development Corporation did the longer stretch.

Mr. Jennissen: One concern I have, and I do not want to talk too legalistically, but when I was in South Indian Lake—I flew in there and also I flew into Pukatawagan, and it was about that time when it was very close to ice breakup, but I could see half-ton trucks actually using winter roads when from the air it looked awfully unsafe.

I am just wondering, in the eventuality that something terrible does happen, some tragedy, legally could the province be sued, or the road system? I am not sure how this would work, but it is just one of those things that made me wonder. First of all, people should not have been on that road, but they were, and if something happened—

Mr. Findlay: We certainly have a problem there, because we will post the road that it is not open, not ready for traffic, or at the end of the season we will post that the road is closed or maybe even to be used only at night, but we have no authority to prevent people from using it, even though it is posted and they use it at their own risk. We post it not to use it, they use it at their risk, but we have no authority to do anything to stop them from using it. They do it at their discretion.

Surprisingly, I am not aware of any incidents associated with that, but you are right; they are doing it at the beginning and at the end of the season, times

when the department recommendation is not to be using it.

Mr. Jennissen: I thank the minister for all that information. It is very useful for me. I would like to turn this over now to some of my colleagues from Rupertsland and, I believe, Thompson.

* (1700)

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I believe that I would like to ask the minister, or Mr. Chairperson perhaps, just to respond to me since—

An Honourable Member: Could I ask the member to speak up. I am having trouble because of all the fans or maybe even change seats there would be very helpful. You are a big man, but you have a soft voice.

Mr. Robinson: At times.

There are a couple of questions I have, Mr. Chairperson, for the minister, with respect, and I know my colleagues the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) have raised this issue about the Norwin contract with the bands of the Southeast Tribal Council and as well with the Island Lake tribal council.

Last year we had a bit of a problem prior to the start of the winter road season being opened with respect to the cuts by this government and the contract that Norwin had anticipated. I am wondering as to what stage the negotiations are at this year for the upcoming winter road season, '95-96.

Mr. Findlay: Norwin had a five-year contract, five-year agreement, which is now concluded and in that contract the amount to be paid was to be negotiated each year, but that agreement is now concluded.

Last year I met, along with staff, with Norwin and we had asked that over the course of this past winter they keep records as to hours of equipment use so we could have some idea as to whether the contract was close to being accountable relative to the hours of equipment use that were involved in building the road. That information did not come forward over the course of

the winter, so it makes it difficult for us to negotiate on the same basis for next year as we did over the last five.

Mr. Robinson: I believe I heard the minister say, Mr. Chairperson, that the ball is sort of in a park of the Norwin group as far as coming to the province to negotiate a new contract, realizing that the five-year contract has now expired. Is that what the minister has said?

Mr. Findlay: The five-year contract that had been in place is now completed. At this stage there is no contract for the future.

Mr. Robinson: Chief Larry Barker, who is the chairperson of the Norwin group, and others that are a part of that, Chief Geordie Little of Garden Hill, Chief Harper of Red Sucker Lake, Chief McDougall of Wasagamack, Chief Joe Guy Wood of St. Theresa Point and, of course, the communities along the southeast communities have made pleas to this government to get back to the negotiating table as far as a renewal, as far as I understand, for a new agreement with respect to a new contract as far as the road from Hollow Water to the Island Lake communities and all the tributaries that result from that road reaching the Allen Lake areas.

I am wondering how swiftly are the officials of the minister's department going to be moving to begin the negotiations to perhaps renew a contract with Norwin?

Mr. Findlay: A meeting has been set for June 29 to start the discussion process agreed to on both sides.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, another concern that has been expressed to us, while the winter road season is open, which the minister and his department can well appreciate, it kind of offsets the burden that is experienced on a regular basis by the people in the remote communities that are serviced by the winter road system, and many rely on that to get their year's supply of building materials and gasoline and such commodities.

So it is a very important link to the outside world for these communities that rely on the winter road system.

As well, it is used—particularly the J.J. Harper Memorial Trail, which begins at Hollow Water into the Island Lake area—during the duration of the winter road season.

I would like to ask the minister and his department, is the winter road system indeed designated as a provincial road during the course of the winter season?

Mr. Findlay: No, it is not. The restrictions or speed limits or weight controls on those roads are not covered in The Highway Traffic Act.

There had been some discussion with the First Nations communities about doing that. There was not a desire to proceed to include it in The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Robinson: I just have one question, Mr. Chairperson, on this particular subject, on the Norwin construction group.

I am glad to hear that the meeting has been established for the 29th of June. I am wondering how quickly the minister anticipates his department to conclude an agreement so that the people of these remote communities will be able to look forward to a winter road. I am just wondering if the negotiations, the dialogue with the First Nations communities that are involved with Norwin, if that will be put in high gear, so to speak, with respect to coming up with an agreement.

Mr. Findlay: I cannot predict how long negotiations will take because I do not know what issues the two parties are going to bring to the table that will be in dispute. After the first meeting we might have a degree of understanding as to the differences that exist between us and the First Nations and then Norwin in this particular instance. I cannot predict. I would hope they would proceed fairly rapidly after all the discussions that were held last year, but at this stage it is not possible to predict.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to thank the minister for his responses on these questions that are of very great importance to many northern communities and particularly the remote ones that rely on these winter

road systems to ease the high cost of living in northern communities. Many times the cost of living is sometimes four or five, six times greater than that in southern Manitoba.

My colleague the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) also asked a question about the Gillam to Shamattawa winter road system. I understand that the minister did respond to that. The agreement that is being worked upon, is that with the Shamattawa First Nation or is that with the federal government? I do not believe that we were clear on that.

* (1710)

Mr. Findlay: Shamattawa First Nation.

Mr. Robinson: One very quick question on that. I believe it was '93-94, the winter road season from Gillam to Shamattawa was limited to about 10 days I believe that year. Contrary to what the band there felt, it should have been much longer than the 10 days it was. I am wondering if that—such things like this in a time to come, in years to come could perhaps be taken into consideration, particularly when the roads were in fairly good shape but the maintenance was not kept up.

Mr. Findlay: In '93-94, there was some dispute over building it as a toll road. So the end result is, we built it as a department, 100 percent our cost, and kept it open for 10 days. Then Shamattawa Band operated it from that point on. We understand they kept it open and used it for a longer period of time. In '94-95, this past year, as I mentioned earlier to a response to a question of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), it was done on a 50-50 basis with Shamattawa, at a cost of \$177,000. A very good road was put in this past year. The whole process worked a lot better this past year than it did the year before.

Mr. Robinson: As is outlined in the appropriations of this department, we are trying to, as well, maximize employment opportunities for local community members in the areas that winter road systems are established. Two questions, I guess, in one: Firstly, will local people be utilized in the building and in the maintenance of these winter roads? As well, with the winter roads system, will the province be fair in its

negotiations as far as contributing a fair share to the construction and maintenance of the winter road systems in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Findlay: I can say we always want to be fair, but what the member must realize is that our mission is to maximize the amount of road activity, maintenance and construction we can have done throughout the province at the lowest possible cost. The lower the cost for any given unit, the more miles of work we can get done. At the same time, we try to be fair to all partners in the process. Whether fair is good enough in terms of the member's interpretation, only time will tell, but the department definitely does try to be fair in the process.

Mr. Ashton: I too have a number of questions in terms of roads. I know some of these issues have been raised in the past. As the minister is aware too, through some correspondence, I have raised a number of these issues, so I would also like to indicate from the start that I am quite happy with written responses if that is required in terms of detail. I am not expecting the minister will respond immediately on some of the issues, although some of them I have already in correspondence.

On Highway 391, I know there has been some discussion on that, but I am wondering, beyond the current allocations, what the long-term plans are for 391, without getting into some of the more political debate we have been involved in with 391. I think a lot of people in communities, Nelson House, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake and communities that rely on the road, such as South Indian Lake, are seeking some indication as to what the long-term planning is. There is some work taking place this year, but I would appreciate some indication over the next five-year period, or whatever the department considers long term, what the prospects are. Quite frankly, I think the bottom line is for some form of hard surface, seal coat, some improved surface over the current surface.

As the minister is aware, 391 basically, in a lot of areas, is down to bedrock; it is down to rocks. You are dealing with surface that goes back to the early '70s, so that is one issue I would like to raise on behalf of, certainly, my constituents in Thompson and Nelson House.

Another issue is in terms of the road into Split Lake, 280. Basically, I would suggest, the big concern there is in terms of the width of the road. There have been a number of accidents already which I think are indirectly related to the width of the road. There was a very tragic accident involving a young resident of Gillam that hit a parked car, and I realize other circumstances, but there have been a number of incidents of that nature.

Believe me, I have been on the road at the point where I have nearly ended up in the ditch because of large vehicles pretty well dominating the driveable surface of the road. I know that Chief Garson at Split Lake has raised this concern repeatedly with myself and others, and I would just like to indicate that there are specific sections too which I know the Split Lake Band will be more than prepared to help the department identify as being problem areas. They are, I think, looking at that as being the kind of upgrading that is needed.

A lot of my constituents in Wabowden use 373. Many have family ties with Cross Lake. I realize that may have been raised by other members of the Legislature, but 373 is obviously a road that requires a great deal of upgrading. I have also mentioned to the department, in the past, suggestions from the community of Wabowden that if there is going to be upgrading taking place there, one way of looking at it would be the possibility of constructing from Wabowden directly through what used to be the old bombardier trail, which is considerably less distance. That may be a prospect, and I would appreciate some indication as to whether that is technically feasible.

Another community concern for both York Landing and Ilford is all-weather road access. In the community of York Landing, and I have corresponded with the minister on this, obviously, the first preference would be, in terms of connection into Split Lake, which would hook up into 280, an all-weather road. There also, however, is the question of York Landing to Ilford. In 1977, there had been approval for a York Landing-Ilford road connection. This would allow for a couple of things. For people living in Ilford, it would allow for access to York Landing, which does have ferry service for most of the summer. So it does, in fact,

give some all-weather road access. For people from York Landing, it would allow access to the bayline.

Just by way of information, with the signing and the process ongoing, the approval of the Northern Flood Agreement, the community of York Landing is now going to be receiving a significant amount of land in its formerly traditional area, in addition to some of the traditional use areas it has had in York Factory areas. So what that means basically is, people are increasingly returning to York Factory, and it is a lot easier for people if they can access the train, fly into Churchill and charter from Churchill than it is currently, where they have to charter a plane, say, out of Gillam to pick them up in York Landing and then go to York Factory, which is about three or four times the expense.

I would indicate, technically, too, the current winter road that runs through there runs basically on a ridge area that does not require significant bridge structures or crossing of water. It is all land. It is all fairly high ground. That is one of the reasons that route was selected before. The reason I am saying that is because I know the department has responded on the York Landing-Split Lake portion, indicating that is fairly expensive because of that fact of the water that is involved. So I would appreciate some update on the York Landing-Ilford issue, and I know that certainly the community of York Landing, York Factory in particular, has raised a number of these issues with the department.

A couple of other issues, one is with Thicket Portage. I know my colleague the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was in Thicket Portage with me just over a year ago and heard the concerns first-hand. Thicket Portage, actually, is in a unique position. It is going to have road access by 1997, if the current plans continue, because of Repap. So the big concern in Thicket Portage obviously is in terms of what the status of that road would be, if it would be maintained at all by the Department of Highways. I would certainly urge that it would be because, quite frankly, it will make a significant benefit to that community.

Obviously Pikwitonei is another community I have raised in the past. It is in a different situation because Repap is not that close to Pikwitonei currently, and

Repap does not have the same kind of timber in that area. It may access it at some point down the line, but I would like to ask if there are any feasibility studies that have been undergoing in terms of Pikwitonei.

Just to finish off, the bottom line with the concerns I have raised is obviously to upgrade some of the existing roads, 391, 280 and 373, but also to give consideration to the communities that do not have roads, period. Pardon me, one other thing I should mention on that is, those communities that are impacted or served by winter roads have raised this concern—I know this was raised, I think, last year by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid)—that is, in terms of the possibility of extending the winter road season. That did not apply this year because of the weather conditions, to say the least. It was barely possible to have any kind of winter road for a while. Believe you me, it was pretty rough; a couple of times I went in what normally would have been pretty good time for a winter road.

In a normal year, you are dealing with a situation where people are travelling in light vehicles prior to Christmas. It is important, particularly in the communities, to be able to get into Thompson, for example, for the ability to shop and whatnot. They are doing it anyway. It is not a question of safety strictly. It is often fairly safe that time of the year because of the thickness of the ice.

The real question becomes one of maintenance. The department has moved, for example, in the case of Pikwitonei, to involve a local contractor, John Thorne, who has often done it on his own initiative. As a local resident, he knows the value of that, but I would certainly urge, as a matter of fact, ask for an update if there has been any consideration for that.

Essentially what happens is, for a very limited amount of additional maintenance built into the contract, you can extend the road season, I would suggest, in most cases, by certainly a week or two on either end. Not this year, I fully admit that. It was pretty mushy. But, in the average year, you would be able to extend the road, get people in before—quite frankly, it is before Christmas that people are concerned about.

* (1720)

I realize there are a lot of questions here, and I am more than happy to accept written responses in terms of any detail. I will certainly welcome any preliminary comments from the minister.

Mr. Findlay: Yes, I count one, two, three, four, five, six, seven about eight different issues there. They will all take a fair bit of response, so I will commit to the member we will respond in written form and some of them we have already talked about, but we will give the member the update. I think some of them we have already responded in letter to the member in the past, I think, particularly York Landing, I think we have responded, if I am not mistaken, in the past.

Mr. Ashton: York Landing-Split Lake, not York Landing-Ilford.

Mr. Findlay: Okay. We will respond but I am going to tell you, when you ask for extension of the season of winter road use, it is dicey. We have to take the input from the staff, the professionals, the people who know about the thickness of the ice and the probability of somebody going through. I would hate to ever be in a situation where we extended a season and then some accident did happen. We all full well know that people do use them before they are open and after they are closed, and so it is a high risk there.

As I said earlier to the member for Flin Flon, we are very amazed that there have not been accidents or incidents because of that. But weather conditions, the member recognizes, this past winter were far too mild for a good winter road season, far too mild, and I do not know whether all communities got all their bulk products in that they wanted to get in. I do not know if they made it or not. I kind of wonder how they could have because the season was so short.

We will respond in writing on the whole series of questions raised, and thank the member for his requests, but the price tag on it in total may be a little hefty, but anyway we will respond.

Mr. Ashton: I realize this. It is a matter of priorities. There are always limited budgets, but what I

particularly tried to reference is some of the feedback which I gave, for example, the northern meeting that took place. You know, I think a lot of times people in the communities are very reasonable in terms of recognizing that factor, for example, I mentioned 280. Chief Garson has mentioned the width of the road being a factor, and I think everybody would like to have a paved road but everybody understands that it takes a lot of money and it takes a lot of time.

I think 391 is a bit different. I think it needs to be hard-surfaced. It is an older road. It is a fire exit as we are finding now. This is the best time of year to raise this because of what has happened. I mention also in terms of the Ilford-York Landing connection because that would be substantially cheaper to construct and the plans are already there. This project was approved in 1977. It was cancelled by an incoming government, and, to be fair, it was a project that people lost some interest in but there is revived interest in it given the York Factory factor.

I mentioned even the case of 373 as well, the suggestion out of the community of Wabowden, because I think if you get in and talk to people in the communities they often can come up with ideas. Some of them may not work. They may be impossible to fill, but in a lot of cases they can come up with ideas on the cost side as well. I recognize there is a limited budget. We can argue about priorities for the North and what not and we will continue that political argument over time, but I think if you talk to people in the communities, they will come up with suggestions that are a lot cheaper than—I do not mean this as being critical to the department, but I think sometimes it is not recognized what people are really asking for is dealing with the immediate problems rather than everybody wanting a paved road.

Mr. Findlay: I would just caution that you can go in and build a low-cost option now, but five or 10 years later then the request is, why did we not get one equal to Mr. X over there and then you are into the upgrade costs. So the department is caught betwixt and between. Do we try to respond to what the future expectation is, or do we just build the low-cost version that gets them between here and there for today? I think some of the roads up there were built with the

low-cost option and we are paying the price today, trying to get them up to a standard that people expect today.

Mr. Jennissen: I think I would like to pass this section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 2.(f) Winter Roads \$2,575,000—pass.

2.(g)(1).

Mr. Jennissen: Just one question actually, with regard to the footnote on page 55: This amount recovered from municipalities, cities, towns, local government districts, LGDs, government agencies and private citizens. I would like some clarification on that. First of all, the amount and the nature of work that would be done.

* (1730)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, \$1.44 million is collected back by us from, as you see there, municipalities, cities, towns, local government districts, government agencies and private citizens, but it shows up in our appropriation as an expenditure in Highways, but the recoverable portion goes directly to general revenue.

So it is an expense on our books, but general revenue receives \$1.4 million on the revenue side. I might say that is not fair, but that is just the way the books work.

Mr. Jennissen: The question that I actually had was, how much is from private citizens, because I was not sure what was involved here? Like if they want their front yards fixed, is this what this is all about?

Mr. Findlay: Out of the overall \$1.44 million figure, I have a number of categories here, but private citizens is virtually zero. But I will give you some idea of where we are getting it from.

Remote communities, \$800,000; MPIC \$100,000; MTS \$10,000; Manitoba Hydro \$120,000; federal government, \$10,000; other provinces, \$70,000; Indian bands, remote areas, \$30,000. So it is a wide spectrum, but private citizens, it does not appear that there are any

involved. Another category is gas utility, sewer and water contractors, \$300,000.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(g) Other Jurisdictions (1) Gross Expenditures \$2,440,000—pass; (2) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$1,000,000)—pass.

Item 2.(h) Planning and Design (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Jennissen: I just have one question on 15.2(h)(1). Production of Manitoba's official highway map, I was wondering about the number of maps we produce and the cost.

Mr. Findlay: Expenditure of \$80,000; 250,000 maps printed. I hope every one means a tourist.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(h) Planning and Design (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,746,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$487,400—pass.

Item 2.(j) Northern Airports and Ferries (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,088,300.

Mr. Jennissen: This is the section on northern airports and ferries?

I guess the question I have is why—well, I know why. It states that these positions were lost due to automated weather stations, but under professional and technical salaries and employee benefits, it is down from 89.12 to 71.12. That is quite a number of positions, and I wonder if the minister could speak about that a little bit.

I am concerned especially because I know that some of the accidents in the past, such as the Kenora accident, might have been partially due to the fact that some of that automated weather stuff was not working properly. First of all, I guess, losing the jobs, I would like you to comment on that.

Mr. Findlay: The member has identified the reduction from 89 to 71 staff people, a reduction of 17 positions. The activities of those 17 people were associated with giving atmospheric and environmental information to AES, a branch of the federal government Atmospheric

Environment Services, and AES, that contract came to an end and they automated the services, put the automatic equipment in. Therefore, the 17 people that we had in our employ were no longer needed to serve the AES contract, because AES had put in the automated equipment.

Mr. Jennissen: They were effectively laid off then?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, they were all laid off. Of the 17, eight accepted severance pay, four resigned, three are still on the redeployment list, one has been redeployed and one position was vacant. So 16 people were affected, one has been redeployed, four resigned and eight took severance pay.

Mr. Jennissen: There is one training position as well that was affected, right?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, that staff training position was in Beausejour.

Mr. Jennissen: Under Activity Identification, the second line, medical retrievals. Are we talking of medivac here?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, it is the medivac.

Mr. Jennissen: How many planes are involved with medivac?

Mr. Findlay: The actual airplanes involved are all budgeted under Government Services, but the fleet consists of two air ambulances and one air taxi, a Navaho, which is stationed out at Thompson. Plus, there are a number of the private planes or private companies that have air taxis that will move people back and forth for medical reasons, on call, of course, where our capability or the government's capability is overburdened.

Mr. Jennissen: Is that number down from, let us say, previous years? It seems to me that at one point there were some cuts in the medivac planes.

Mr. Findlay: The actual air transportation capacity for medical purposes, because of the involvement of the private sector, the actual capacity in the province has

increased with the number of different companies having planes equipped to do the appropriate transfer of individuals back and forth between hospitals, but we are into Government Services here now. We just supply the air strips for their use.

Mr. Jennissen: The last statement under Activity Identification, administers the Manitoba Airport Assistance Program, is this some connection with the feds offloading on us?

Mr. Findlay: It is what is called the Southern Manitoba Airport Assistance Program. The grants are \$1,200 to airports with a gravel strip and \$2,400 for a paved strip. There are a number of airports that qualify and, in addition to that, Swan River has a higher allocation; Leaf Rapids and Swan River have higher special allocations than the rest of the airports. It looks like there is a total of 30 airports involved in that program who receive some operating assistance, marginal compared to their total costs.

Mr. Jennissen: Regarding that airport at Leaf Rapids, I am under the impression there are two phases to that. Lengthening the runway—there is an improvement section and a lengthening runway section. Is that correct? The question I have is, could that be done together? That is just something I heard via the grapevine. I do not know if that is correct or not.

Mr. Findlay: The member was asking about Lynn Lake? Leaf Rapids.

Just for the member's understanding and also for my education as we go along here, in the North there are 30 airports that are under provincial jurisdiction. Twenty-two of them are staffed and eight are not staffed. There are at least six airports that are federally operated in the North. Leaf Rapids that you are referring to has made a federal application for funding for the airport upgrade that you are talking about. It is a federal application of about a million dollars, I believe.

Mr. Jennissen: Is the province also doing an upgrade there at the same time?

Mr. Findlay: No.

Mr. Jennissen: Okay, so there are not two projects involved.

Mr. Findlay: I think the member is aware that of these federal airports, this is where the federal government is getting into reducing the deficit or the subsidy to the airport over the next five years.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, I know the federal government is reducing subsidies for northern airports such as Thompson, The Pas, Norway House, Flin Flon and Lynn Lake. Who is expected to pick up the slack? Is it going to be simply offloading back on the municipalities, on the towns?

Mr. Findlay: That will be the end result. Yes, I think Thompson is in some discussion with the federal government; for sure, Flin Flon. Churchill has been designated remote, so they are okay, Norway House and Churchill. Lynn Lake, we are still in some hopeful negotiation with the federal government that they will ultimately consider it to be remote; the initial answer was no. But we did meet with the federal deputy who gave us some hope that continue to advance your arguments and they might give further consideration to Lynn. Lynn is certainly enlisted. Hearing from the mayor, he does not feel there is any hope of it being able to be viable by running it as a community.

* (1740)

Mr. Jennissen: No, I agree with Lynn Lake. Because it is a fairly small community now, there is no way they could upkeep an airport that size. It is a big airport. It was designed maybe 25 years or so ago for a much larger population.

Mr. Findlay: Then you look at The Pas, it is a massive airport. It was built for a totally different reason, but it is a very large airport and I do not know how that will eventually come out there.

Mr. Jennissen: One question I have. I will go back to Flin Flon again if you do not mind. The cost for that will be about \$300,000 a year and that community is already under stress with layoffs and so on. The tax base is shrinking. We cannot basically upkeep the water and sewage system the way we want it.

Channing does not even have water and sewage. I just do not think that city should be expected to handle a \$300,000 extra load, although they are negotiating, I realize. I just do not think they can do it without cutting corners.

Now, when I flew from Flin Flon to Winnipeg a couple of weeks ago, I noticed—this was on a weekend on a Sunday—there was no airport security. When I asked about it I was given the answer—

Mr. Findlay: At Flin Flon?

Mr. Jennissen: At Flin Flon. This had never happened before in all the years I had been there, 23 years, and the argument was, well, we cannot afford to hire security on weekends. But to me it seems counterproductive. Either you have security or you do not. I mean, if you are going to advertise that you do not have security on weekends—

Now I know when I got into this a little bit further and asked some more questions, apparently it was the airline that had decided that. It was not the town or the feds or anything. But I have some concern because if that is the direction we are going, at some point the safety of the public will be compromised, and I know there is no easy answer to it, either.

Mr. Findlay: There is no question that what you are seeing and experiencing there is being experienced right across the country.

The federal government has taken and made some decisions to progress in this direction without any opportunity for much input from any direction—communities, commercial aircraft companies or the provincial governments. They say they have consulted, but they have been on a track that has been one way and that is just to get out.

I guess there is some money available for capital upgrade that different communities can apply for. I would not want to say how long that might still be there, but there is definitely going to be facing the operating costs. It will cause communities to be decreasing the costs. Just picking an example off the top of my head, if there is a fire truck in the

community, I am sure the community will not be able to afford to also have one at the airport which may be the case now, so you will see that they will be trying to do with existing services which will not be quite as convenient as they were before. So these changes are going to happen.

Mr. Jennissen: Under Expected Results on page 58 of the yellow book: "Improved access for the physically disabled at provincial airports." That must be referring to the larger airports, not to the smaller, northern remote airports?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, in the airports that we are responsible for, a few years ago there was a joint federal-provincial contract to purchase wheelchairs for these airports. They are there. They are under the responsibility or jurisdiction of the airlines for the use of them at the airports. In any renovations that are done at airports, access for the handicapped is included in the renovation process.

Mr. Jennissen: I just have one last question in this section and it is just for clarification. The very last one under Expected Results on page 58: "Provision of an economical alternative to bridges and/or road networks in remote areas in the province." Is that simply stating an obvious fact that airports, air travel is an alternative? Is that all we are saying here, or is there something else here?

Mr. Findlay: Referring primarily to ferries.

Mr. Jennissen: Okay.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 2.(j) Northern Airports and Ferries (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,088,300—pass; (j)(2) Other Expenditures \$2,390,000—pass.

(k) Materials and Research (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,608,000.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, this deals with subappropriation 15.2.(k) Materials and Research. I was just wondering about inventory of gravel and rock sources because I have been talking with some geologists and they felt that maybe we had not done enough, I guess it is called exploration or prospecting or whatever. The question

I have is, do we have enough gravel on hand to meet anticipated demands for the next few years?

Mr. Findlay: Right across the province?

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, right across the province.

Mr. Findlay: Well, I think the member would realize that different regions of the province have different kinds of inventories for the present and the future. Some are well endowed, other regions, there is a fairly significant truck haul to get it from where it is to where you need it. But the department does continue to work to identify new deposits. It would be fair to say that the private sector, because they are also searching for deposits, may find deposits in areas that might be useful for us.

We use resources or aggregate from Crown land sources, some of which may be under our jurisdiction, some, maybe, have been staked by the private sector. As well, we will use from private sector pits in locations where that is the most economical way to source the aggregate for a particular project.

Mr. Jennissen: But we do not specifically have a program or group of people earmarked to find new deposits of gravel.

Mr. Findlay: One individual's responsibility is to be sure the inventory is adequate province-wide but, within the regions, staff are in the process of trying to identify additional pockets that would be useful in the future.

Mr. Jennissen: I have one last question, and that is on the Gravel Pit Rehabilitation Program. I am not familiar with it. Just say a few words about it, please.

* (1750)

Mr. Findlay: I can only comment in a general sense. The province has what is called a Mining Reserve Fund, where aggregate, as it is mined, a tariff is paid towards this fund for the purpose of restoration and rehabilitation. We give grants regularly to municipalities, by and large, who are involved in

restoration of an old pit, and there has been a lot of uptake. It has been a very successful program.

It has been going on for the last three or four years, proactively, I guess, maybe because there is more environmental concern nowadays, and old pits have been identified as a blight on the landscape, so municipalities, particularly, have been utilizing this mineral reserve fund to source funds to do some rehabilitation on old gravel pits.

If the member wants to see one that was done very successfully, it is up in Birds Hill. It is called Silver Springs. Anyway, it is a big, old gravel pit. All the gravel is now somewhere in Winnipeg over the last 80 years. It is a big, old pit. It has a spring in the bottom with fish, and trees are planted, and there are houses built all around it. It is actually quite an attractive location now, but it was quite a large pit of, I would say, 10 times the size of this building, and it served the city of Winnipeg well over the years.

It is one that I am aware of that has quite successfully been rehabilitated to a valuable asset for the community.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, in fact, just out of The Pas, I notice there are a bunch of pits—well, a bunch, there are two or three on one side and three or four on the other side—and I presume that once upon a time, they were gravel pits, and they are all nice fishing holes now, I guess. People stop and they catch—I presume they are stocked little pits. They probably catch rainbow trout there, so, yes, it is quite nice.

I have no more questions on this.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 2.(k) Materials and Research (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,608,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$501,600—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (1,009,200)—pass.

2.(m) Traffic Engineering (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$793,700.

Mr. Jennissen: Under Estimates of Expenditure for 1995-96, I notice that the salary years are the same for

both this year and last year—no, they are not the same. Sorry, the salary year numbers are the same, but the actual salaries have gone up a fair amount, from \$459,000 to \$494,000, and I am just wondering, we are still talking 11 people here, I presume, and it seems quite a high increase.

I am just wondering if the minister could comment on that.

Mr. Findlay: The difference of \$35,000 for the 11 employees is identified as merit increases.

Mr. Jennissen: No more questions in this section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(m) Traffic Engineering (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$793,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$207,200—pass.

2.(n) Policy, Planning and Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Jennissen: This is under Policy, Planning and Development? I think we have a few questions here. And I think I have picked just the right time to do this, did I not? Strategic planning at its finest.

Under Activity Identification, the second portion about the development of Winnipeg's potential as a multimodal distribution centre, I know the minister has talked about this before, and I was very, very interested with regard to the Northern Hemisphere Distribution Alliance and a whole series of initiatives, which include the WINNPORT and multimodal cargo hub implementation programs and so on. I am just wondering, I know we do not have much time, but maybe just say a few words about it, an update.

Mr. Findlay: I will just comment in generalities, I guess. I think you have to give credit to Hubert Kleysen and Lynn Bishop and Winnipeg 2000 for sort of sitting around and coming up with this initiative. Certainly the city of Winnipeg and the province and the federal government are all very supportive of the initiative they are attempting to bring together. An initial preliminary assessment was done and then it was decided that there was some merit here.

We have about \$600,000 involved in a study right now, a major study to determine if there are customers or users that would be able to bring planes in here with product for distribution. They are very optimistic. I was at a public meeting about just before the election, I believe it was, where a lot of business people were there and talking about progress to date and what the opportunities were, a lot of enthusiasm. Certainly there is an area west of the existing airport that has been identified as a probable location if warehousing was to happen.

When I was at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, we had a transportation section, and there were a lot of people there from South America, Europe and the U.S. When I raised the issue about what is the significance of Winnipeg possibly becoming a major global location for a distribution of goods from Europe or from Asia, instantly, when I mentioned it, everybody knew about it and the word had travelled.

We are located in the right location relative to particularly Korea and Amsterdam in terms of distance. We are at a distance where up to one plane load of fuel can get here. If you look at Los Angeles, we are closer to Seoul, Korea, than Los Angeles is over the polar route.

We have a large population within a 30-hour truck drive from here, obviously south, to distribute goods in North America. We are certainly closer to Chicago than Los Angeles. So people say Los Angeles should be the natural gateway coming in. We economically can compete very well. We have a 24-hour airport and we have a lot going for us.

I look forward to the business plan that is presently being done and the ability of the private sector to find opportunities. It has great job potential here.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., this section of the Committee of Supply will recess until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): The Committee of Supply meeting in

Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Natural Resources.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits, on page 115 of the main Estimates book.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Before we continue on, I would like to ask the minister if he would want to take the time for another forest update. Is there anything new since this morning?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Chairman, I want to, if I could, give some humble advice to the member for Dauphin. I have been known in the past to be very forthright with the information that I try and provide for my critics and my colleagues in the House, and there are two ways that these things work. We then have developed a matter of understanding and a certain amount of trust between ourselves as to whether the information that I present—or if there are problems out there that the individuals want to have proper information on, I try and provide that.

I just want to say that the member does not do himself or the general public any favours by trying to raise issues in the House, as he did today, and try and make some political points on the thing. If there was some concern about equipment, which, I think, by raising it in that perspective, without having ascertained some of the facts, it creates concern out of the people in the northern communities that we are not basically doing our job. In each one of these communities, we have many, many trained firefighters. We have a very efficient system that we are running, and by raising sort of the kind of questions and the concerns that he did, in the public view, at a time when we are having a major disaster, I think, does not do anybody any good.

So I want to just caution the member. If he has concerns, I would rather that he then brought them forward, because out of a thousand firefighters that we probably have out there, I can tell him right now that if he wants to run around, he will find some individuals that have some reasons to feel that they have better knowledge as to how this should be run. We have very

professional people out there, so I just want to raise this as a caution.

You can make the choice as to how you want to play this. I then make the choice as to whether I co-operate with you or not. So I am saying this as a gesture of co-operation to you: be a little cautious. There is always that desire to play the politics. I do not play that way. When I do, I do it very, very efficiently. I have been here for eighteen years. So I would rather take an offer to the member to be as co-operative as possible in terms of getting information, working together, and I will give him a copy of the latest update of the fire situation right now and just raise this as a gesture of friendship and co-operation to the member that you cannot have it both ways.

It is either politics that we will play, as to how we operate, or we are going to have a bit of a confidence measure between ourselves that I will try and provide all the information I can, with the most sincere, best efforts, and that we can both get as much as possible out of the process of the questions in the House as well as the Estimates process.

Mr. Struthers: I want to first begin by thanking the minister for humbly giving me the advice that he just gave. I am not so sure whether I would consider it advice or a threat, that he just made.

I came here absolutely willing to co-operate with the minister. I have no doubt that the people in his department or the people that are out fighting the fires in northern Manitoba right now are doing an excellent job. Not once do I doubt the ability of the people in his department and the volunteers and the people that he has hired to work on these fires, not once do I doubt their ability or their integrity.

I want to make sure that the minister knows that I understand a political answer and a political question when I hear it. I yesterday simply raised a concern that was brought to me by people within his own department, three people that I had spoken to and another person who I had listened to on the radio, who were making the claims that there is not enough firefighting equipment in the North. If the minister thinks that brushing the question off by simply

complimenting the people who are there is an answer that is acceptable, then I just have to disagree with him.

I get a little bit offended when once again by a member of the provincial government cabinet get accused of playing politics on an issue. The advice that I want to give the minister is that at no time will I ever ask a question without doing my homework first.

My homework was done yesterday. I did not get an answer yesterday in the House. I left it at that. I re-asked the question today to try to get an answer from the minister. Again I got the same answer as I got yesterday. I got an answer from a different minister who again skirted the issue. I, too, am here in a spirit of co-operation and I am willing to be friends. I also want answers to the questions. Maybe I will just stop there and get some response from the minister in that regard.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, based on the question that the member raised about the firefighters at Brandon, these trainees are basically specialized in building fires. They have no knowledge of a forest fire or how to fight a forest fire. That is why, you know, bringing it forward and saying, why do we not utilize those kinds of people? They do not have the ability to get up into the northern outposts where we have trained people and fight forest fires.

In terms of the equipment question that he raised today, we have warehouses full of equipment in Winnipeg with semis standing by. As equipment is needed, it gets moved out to the field, so if an individual who has possibly not been hired at the present time because of the way we deploy our troops out there out of the 1,000 people that are trained, has some kind of a hang-up about the equipment end of it, I take exception to that because that is not factual.

We have all kinds of equipment and we have people that basically sit and operate the whole fire system and move people across the province. We have people in our Tac crews that when we have fires up in Flin Flon or whether it is Thompson or wherever it is, we move the Tac crews, which is our first initial Tac team unit, we move them into wherever it has to be done in a high-speed, efficient way of doing it. This is the five-

man crew that basically we have scattered around the province.

The moment there is a hit and it starts burning, we basically have a helicopter, we drop these people in and these are the first contact people, highly trained and specialized. Then, subject to that, we have 1,000 people trained throughout the province in isolated communities, the communities up North; 75 percent of these people are native, and they are the best firefighters in the country. That is why last year when B.C. had problems with fires the request came, and we moved some of our people out there to basically assist. The people take great pride in knowing that they are the best forest firefighters in the country.

But that does not mean that every individual is going to be hired out there. I can tell the member that by and large when we bring our crews on, first the initial Tac crews, we move them out, the other people move in to do the clean up and do whatever is required. Each one has a card and our forest fire bosses out there, most of them native, they sign the amount of hours that are put in. We know exactly which are our qualified fighters and which are maybe not as qualified. We use whatever we have to use when the time comes.

Mr. Struthers: Well, given that answer, Mr. Chairman, why then did the minister not tell me that yesterday instead of in the House—

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. This is outside the area of Question Period. We are here to discuss the Estimates of Natural Resources, and we have ended up into an extension of Question Period.

I would ask that the committee please proceed with the question on the Estimates process. That is why we are here. That is the process that we are here for, not an extension of Question Period. So I would ask the honourable member to get on with his line of questioning, line-by-line, as we agreed to yesterday.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chair, I will always take the opportunity to defend my reputation when it is—

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member to get on with the

line-by-line questioning on the Estimates. We are not in here to provoke debate. We are here to ask questions, and that is the process.

So if the honourable member has questions on the line-by-line that we are on now, then please ask the questions, or we will move on from there.

Mr. Struthers: On the organizational chart, there is a box underneath the Resource Programs category entitled Policy Co-ordination, G. Baker. I wonder if I could get an indication of what the services are that are provided by the Policy Co-ordination branch, what their connection is to the rest of the organizational chart and the duties that the box in this chart provides.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, while staff is getting me the precise information on it, I would just add that G. Baker is Grant Baker who basically runs the policy portion of it, dealing with, for example, the environmental concerns that we have in forestry operations, for example, developing together with my Forestry people the forest management plan, the environmental concerns that we have in forestry or whether it is water.

Policy Co-ordination co-ordinates and integrates departmental natural resource policy, legislation, environmental impact assessments, co-management agreements, land use planning, and resource allocation in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; undertakes reviews to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of departmental programming; provides for a grant in support of research of value to the departmental mandate.

Objectives are to integrate and co-ordinate departmental policies and programs related to land use, co-management, resource allocation, environmental impacts—I think I said that—sustainable development initiatives and enforcement; to review, streamline and develop integrated and co-ordinated resource management policies and programs; to co-ordinate, develop and standardize departmental enforcement programs; to provide strategic planning, analytic and evaluative support services in order to assist management to improve the effectiveness of departmental programming.

Activity Identification is Crown land planning for northern and Agro-Manitoba and natural resource planning for municipalities and planning districts; research, analyze, evaluate and integrate new and existing resource programs, projects and policies; integrate natural resource policies and programs with those of other departments and governments.

Expected Results are that we have integrated departmental management and allocation plans, sustainable development strategies, area management strategies and environmental impact reports; Crown land policy and procedures manual, resource allocation policies and Crown land classification, including land use and zoning plans; standardized departmental enforcement programs; resource allocation decisions based on principles of preservation, conservation and sustainable development; monitoring of cross-boundary water projects and co-ordination of departmental settlements arising out of hydroelectric and water-control projects and treaty land entitlements.

That sort of summarizes—incidentally, this is where our special investigative unit is, as well.

Mr. Struthers: It certainly sounds like a busy directorate. Who does the policy co-ordinator report to?

Mr. Driedger: The policy co-ordinator reports to Dr. Merlin Shoosmith, who is the assistant deputy minister of Resource Programs, and Dr. Shoosmith reports to the deputy minister, sitting on my left here, and the deputy minister reports to myself.

Mr. Struthers: I understand the line up through the assistant deputy minister and deputy minister to yourself. What about reversing that line? Does that necessarily mean then that if we reversed everything, that the minister could give direction back through the system to the deputy minister, ADM and to Mr. Baker again?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the normal process would be that myself, as minister, if I have areas of concern in any one of these areas that I read to the member, responsibilities under that end of it, I basically give direction to my deputy minister, who then takes it

up with his assistant deputy minister, who gives direction to the Policy Co-ordination department, which then has to develop a position and a policy.

As it comes back through the system, if I do not like it, I send it back and have it corrected, because, ultimately, the decision is still mine, not theirs.

Mr. Struthers: The connection then between the policy co-ordinator and any of the other areas would go through Dr. Shoesmith and from him to, say, Regional Operations or to Land Information or Management Services?

Mr. Driedger: We have an executive group basically that is composed of myself, first of all, the deputy minister, and then we have four basic ADMs who are involved, one being Mr. Harvey Boyle, who is the ADM for Regional Operations, Dr. Merlin Shoesmith, who is Resource Programs. We have Jack Schreuder, who is the Land Information Centre, and then we have Mr. Podolsky, who is here with us under Management Services.

* (1500)

Those six people, by and large, form the executive. Then, depending on the issue, they can pull in any one of the other people who are basically directors of their certain element. For example, if it has to do with Land Information Centre, Mr. Schreuder and the executive would bring in Mr. Elke, or if it was under Management Services, Mr. Podolsky would bring in Mr. Lockett and develop whatever direction we wanted there.

All activities basically come, first of all, through the individual ADM, then to this executive group and the deputy. Ultimately, we then set these decisions. If he is questioning how the decisions are getting made, they are not made in isolation that much, other than the policy direction where the minister wants to go.

I tell them where I want to go with these things, and I say make it work. They will then try and make it work. If they cannot make it work, they come back and say, it cannot be done unless you change legislation, unless you do this or that or change regulations, but,

basically, there is a close-knit working group, because if you do not have that, you are not very efficient.

Mr. Struthers: The Policy Co-ordination section here, is that a new body?

Mr. Driedger: No, Mr. Chairman, it is not, certainly not during the time that I have been there. My predecessor was there for four or five years. I believe it was there during that time.

My deputy informs me that virtually every department has a policy co-ordination unit that basically deals with all the things along the same guidelines that I outlined here. So it is not that it is unique in this department.

But I have to tell you that I am very dependent on the policy group as we develop policies and strategies to make sure that the proper information comes back to my table to ultimately make the right decisions, because many elements, not only within my department but other departments, how that whole things gets co-ordinated.

You have to have things that affect—many of the departments are sort of interrelated on some of the various activities that take place and responsibilities that they have, so it is a very important component. They are all important. But this one has more of an importance, I suppose, in terms of the decision making.

Mr. Struthers: Has Mr. Baker been the director of that policy co-ordination for some time now, or is he new?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I am told, at least five, six years that Mr. Baker has been there—about five or six years.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Item 12.1 Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$388,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$83,400—pass.

1.(c) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$608,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$333,400—pass.

1.(d) Financial Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,212,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$232,500—pass.

1.(e) Human Resource Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$825,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$147,200—pass.

1.(f) Resource Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$639,600.

Mr. Struthers: You were on a roll there, and I had to slow you down a bit. Under Resource Information Systems—I am reading in the Estimates book that I have been provided here—it states that it provides for human, financial and material resources required to deliver information technology in the department. Could the minister give me some examples of human, financial and material resources?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I am told that the program co-ordination takes place under this: programmer analysts, the computers, purchase of computers, hardware and software, the basic operations of everything in the department.

Mr. Struthers: I would be interested in knowing what the relationship between resource information systems is, the information systems, what the relationship between them is and the Treasury Board.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I might just say that any expenditures related to hardware, software, anything along these lines, everything basically goes back to Treasury Board. As we develop the budgetary process in terms of expenditures, we get targets. Ultimately the various departments get targets; the various directors get targets. Ultimately, when the package is finally completed and we have certain figures, it does not mean that these things do not go back to Treasury Board.

Invariably, the expenditures still have to get Treasury Board approval irrespective of where they are listed throughout the department. So it is not as if we have a carte blanche, once we have the budget approved, that we can go and merrily spend it. Virtually every expenditure still goes back before Treasury Board and

gets final approval, especially when it comes to the computer things and things of this nature.

As my deputy tells me, we have to develop a plan in advance for the year so that we cannot take in the midterm, all of a sudden start changing directions and say, oh, by the way, we want to do something else. The plan has to be submitted in advance to Treasury Board. You have to get approval for the projects that we go ahead with, and if there are any changes from it, I can tell the member that there has to be pretty strong justification for it.

Mr. Struthers: The plan that you mentioned, is that the only form of input that you have in to Treasury Board, influencing the amounts that you get for each of the expenditures that you are looking to spend?

Mr. Driedger: I want to make sure that I understand the direction the member is going. For example, let us see, within the various components of my department, Fisheries for example, when we establish what amount of money are they going to spend and get approval, we have to develop the whole plan, present it as part of our budgetary process, and that is a process that basically starts anytime now and goes on for six months.

Ministers spend a tremendous amount of their time, together with staff, working out what we plan to do a year in advance. Once that plan is filed, together with the figures, once you deviate from that then there has to be a pretty extensive discussion taking place with Treasury Board. My affiliation with Treasury Board is not necessarily weekly but very often because, as we have certain things that we want to expend, there might be certain things that would change in terms of, maybe, some of the funding.

Everything basically goes before Treasury Board. It is sort of said tongue in cheek, you know, that it is, how am I going to put this very discretely, that facing Treasury Board is almost like having your teeth pulled at times, when you do not even have any teeth anymore, you know. It is a pretty extensive system as a safeguard set up so that no department, whether it is this department or any other department, can take and run rampant with what they want to do and make changes. It is very tightly controlled throughout the

system between the various components in the various departments.

Treasury Board, of course, being responsible to the Department of Finance, it is just an ongoing progression in terms of things that have to be gone through, so very, very seldom, I think, is it possible to have—besides, their own people that have their reputation at stake and jobs at stake, there are so many places where you have the safeguards that it is very, very hard for any department, any individual, to not deal very aboveboard with all the dealings.

Mr. Struthers: I appreciate the answer that the minister gives me in terms of tight controls over the expenditures of his department. I realize too, though, that the priorities may change along quickly within any given department. If you do have your yearly plan put together, submitted and okayed by Treasury Board, is there any kind of flexibility that allows you to go ahead with expenditures that may come up from time to time?

*(1510)

Mr. Driedger: Maybe I could clarify this in a different way because we normally take and put into our Estimates approximately \$2 million for firefighting.

Over the years, irrespective of who the government was, this is sort of the figure that is always put there, \$2 million, knowing that that could go way out of whack, like in '89, we spent well in excess of \$50 million.

Even in the case of firefighting, what happens on a weekly basis, my staff prepare, update. It then has to go to Treasury Board for approval for the additional expenditures. So there is always this kind of scenario that takes place.

We know that in a year like this that we will say, well, like, see the \$2 million, we are up to \$10 million approximately right now, but every week we go back and we say, this is what we anticipate. We go to our professional people and ask, what is the weather condition, what are we looking like for seven days in advance? We go to our firefighting people and say, what are we looking at? Based on these weather conditions, what can we expect? Then we make

projections, and then we package all this in sort of a plan. Then we go to Treasury Board on a weekly basis and update them and say, for this week we expect to maybe expend two and a half million dollars, ask for approval for it and outline exactly this many machines, approximately so much manpower, and then, of course, the details come in after it has happened.

We have to get approval for those kinds of expenditures. It is not a problem, necessarily, but we have to make sure that they have all the information.

Mr. Struthers: A little further down under Expected Results, I was interested to see that there would be a redesign of the department's Crown Land registry system. How is that going to be redesigned?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the system that we have for Crown Land registry is relatively outdated. We are working together with the Departments of Agriculture, Energy and Mines, Justice and our department in terms of trying to establish a more modern, updated system in terms of Crown Land registry.

So that is what is happening. This, again, I guess, gives the member the example of how many departments are always interrelated with the registry end of it. You have to have the Justice end of it there. Energy and Mines basically have their portion. Then we have Agriculture Crown lands—you know, how does that component fit into the Crown lands that I administrate. So you have all these players always involved. It is very seldom that one department moves ahead on a project all by itself without having an interrelationship with other departments.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I am still unclear as to what specifically within the Crown Land registry system will be different once the redesigning is done.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I do not know either until I see what they are going to do. People in the department feel that our system is antiquated, and we need to have a better system of doing it.

I have to tell the member that almost on a weekly basis before cabinet, I take forward pieces of information, of corrections, where survey corrections

have taken place. Having had the opportunity to serve as reeve, many years ago, we had to resurvey whole communities where we found out basically that on the legal survey, the next guy's house was partly on the property of the other guy's house. I will tell you something, if you do not think that creates a big fight and fuss, you know, because it is basically just the way they did it with a survey. It was not always done properly, so things were out of whack. These are the things that I think we are correcting to some degree.

My deputy tells me that by this fall, these four departments will be coming up with a plan which at that time will be reviewed. Myself, too, I want to know what we are changing. I do not know that at this point.

My deputy tells me it is not policy that we are changing, just the way that we do the registry. As the member is probably aware, under land title registrations, there are ongoing changes, how it is done. You used to have a title. Now you get a piece of paper that basically tells you this is your title. So there are changes there and we have to make our changes. I believe this is some of it, but I want to see when the plan comes forward.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, that makes it a little more clear for me, but my original thinking was that maybe it was policy that was changing, or you are talking about new equipment or new procedures. Am I on the right track in thinking that or not?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, my staff tell me that the member's assessment is correct.

Mr. Struthers: So it will be new equipment into the department and new procedures in which you go about registering Crown lands?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, Mr. Chairman, they will be coming forward with a plan in terms of what should be done, but whether that plan can be implemented immediately, because we do not know exactly what the costs are going to be—it could be substantive, and if it is going to be a couple of hundred thousand dollars to implement this, then there is going to have to be a plan devised together with Treasury Board as to how much we do at one time.

It is not just simply saying, well, we have a plan; now we are going to spend this money and do it. It will have to be worked out within the financial possibilities that we have within the department, as well as what Treasury Board will allow us to do, the big Pooh-Bahs, so to speak. I should not say that.

Mr. Struthers: I hope this has nothing to do with the big Pooh-Bahs, but who initiated this kind of an initiative?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, that is an interesting question because after the years of having once been a backbencher, then a critic and then becoming a minister, it would be almost mind-boggling to see the number of ideas and plans that staff within the department have, all the things that they would like to see, to have the Cadillac system, the most up-to-date systems. They have more plans and ideas than you can shake a stick at in most cases. What we ultimately do is try and prioritize which ones are the ones that we feel are the most in need of bringing up to a certain standard or up to a certain speed, but it is certainly not for lack of ideas coming forward.

If I go through my department, and it is a pretty substantive department, each one—whether it is Wildlife, Fisheries, Forestry, land-related—every one of them have great ideas in terms of all the things that should be done differently, and most of them related to big-time money, too. That is why they sometimes do not come forward as fast as we would like to see them come forward, but this is one that basically is prioritized.

Maybe this ties into, again, when the member asked how these decisions get made. When we sit as executive, there are all these ideas bouncing around. We identify what we think are the most pressing needs, where we want to move forward with changes, and that is basically then done with the advice of my ADMs, my deputy and myself having a discussion, and that is where a lot of time and hours are spent in terms of deciding which direction to take the department within the financial realms that are available.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chair, I believe the question I have to ask comes under Human

Resource Management, which we just passed a few minutes ago, and I would ask whether it would be possible that we revert back to that line for a few minutes.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I am always co-operative that way. The member can ask whatever she wants.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Agreed.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for his co-operation. When we left yesterday, we were talking about the flexibility that people had as to where staff people could stay, and the minister indicated that he would provide that information when he had it available, and I look for that information at some point.

* (1520)

But I am also interested in looking at the facilities that the department has. I understand Natural Resources has cabins or lodgings in various parts of the province, and that staff from time to time can stay at those facilities. I had raised this issue with the department a couple of years ago, looking for what the policy is with regard to who can stay at those facilities, which employees they are available to.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, without getting too confusing and into too much detail, by and large, we have areas where we need resources, human resources, let us say, our NROs, in isolated areas. Over a period of many years, the department has built certain cabins throughout the province, for example, at Nejanilini Lake, which is an isolated lake way up north. There is a cabin out there because when our people have to go there for research or for whatever reasons up there, they need a place to stay.

Then we also have areas where we have staff on a more permanent basis, which is basically not a community but where we have cabins available for the individual and family to stay if that is required, and then we also have what we call some summer

residences in certain areas where bunkhouses and things of that nature—so there is no cut and dried saying these people qualify for low-rent residences from the Department of Resources, because it depends on the category of part-time work that they do. The member is probably aware that our staff falls off dramatically during the course of the winter, when we basically just have our permanent staff on.

During the summer all the parks and other activities that take place, the figures just go way up. In some of these cases we need to have facilities. I do not even know the extent of how many buildings we have. I just know that from time to time government is getting a little tougher with this and that from time to time we have liquidated or sold some of the cottages and cabins that we have out there for some of the people. We will probably be doing some of that again.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am looking for information on change of policy that the government has made, because in Swan River there is a temporary residence, a bunkhouse as the minister calls it, that is heated year round. In fact, that bunkhouse was used for years; the employees were able to stay there. I know a couple of employees who stayed for long lengths of time; however, it appears that the policy has changed. There is a bunk house now in Swan River that is vacant, and there are employees who come into Swan River but are not allowed to use the facilities. One of these is a temporary employee.

I am looking to the minister. I have asked for this before, to see when the policy changed, why it was that that bunkhouse could be used, and now it sits vacant even though the department is paying the Hydro and the water and it has all the facilities there. There are no people coming in from the outside; the facility is staying empty. What changed in policy, and why is Swan River bunkhouse being treated differently from bunkhouses in other parts of the province? I understand that the same does not apply to other areas of the province.

Mr. Driedger: I beg the member for Swan River not to try and say that we are discriminating in her area. My understanding is that there was a policy change a number of years ago related to providing

accommodations in certain areas for certain people. There is some sensitivity, because we have some people out there who really enjoyed having the accommodations at very, very low rates, and when the policy change took place this was removed, and as a result we have some miffed people out there. Probably this is what the member has probably heard about.

Lest she feel that it is just in Swan River that is taking place, that is not the case. In fact, we are reviewing right now as to how many of these kinds of buildings we will take and really require, whether we should liquidate. We have liquidated some—how many more we will be liquidating—so, yes, the policy change took place two, three years ago, and we are now looking to see how many of these building do we need.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister then provide us with a copy of that policy change? I am looking for something in writing that would indicate when this policy change took place and, again, let us know where it is being carried out, whether it is being actually applied in other regions. That is what I would like to know, just for the satisfaction of my constituents, because the people in my constituency, the two gentlemen who work for Resources, in fact feel that they are being treated differently from other parts of the province. They have said that they are willing to pay for staying at the facility, but that has not been allowed, and the building sits vacant.

I guess what I would ask is a copy of the policy and perhaps some indication in which other regions this is happening.

Mr. Driedger: I think the question is reasonable. I do not have that policy change here, but staff are going to be preparing something, and I will have it back to the member in a couple of days or so in terms of the policy change, when it took place and exactly what we are trying to accomplish with it so that there is no misunderstanding with it.

She can tell the people that raised this with her that we are very sensitive in terms of having the same policy consistent throughout the province, because—I will tell you something, everybody talks to everybody. There is no way you can have one policy in one area

and not the same in the other. She must be well aware that the MGEU is the watchdog over these things, that everybody gets treated very fairly. Maybe some of them want to have a little extra care. Maybe this is where it comes from, but I will get a copy of the policy so that she can maybe understand where we are going with that.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate that. I do not think that these people are looking for extra care. They are looking to be treated fairly, and in particular if there is a facility that is not being used, I think that if there is a way—these people are away from their home, they are doing a job, they are seasonal employees, and if there is a way for the minister to recover some of the costs of operating these facilities, because they are paying Hydro and water there anyway, so if he could recover some of the cost, it would be in the best interest of the department.

The minister knows that any revenue that he can get into his department would be beneficial. So I look forward for that information, and I thank the minister.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, just to conclude that, I repeat the commitment I made in terms of getting that information in writing. I will do more than that. I will get her the specifics on the Swan River cabin itself so that she knows exactly what we have in mind there.

* (1530)

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Item 12.1(f) Resource Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$639,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$58,400—pass.

Item 12.2 Regional Operations (a) Headquarters Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,244,700.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, under the heading of Headquarters Operations they talk about all hunting guides in the province are licensed under Expected Results. I am a little unclear on that.

Am I to assume that they are not all licensed now, and that the move is towards getting them all licensed?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I have been getting advice here. I wonder if I could ask the member to just repeat the question based on what he did.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I read under the Headquarters Operations section under Expected Results, "All hunting guides in the province are licensed." I read into that that they are not all licensed now, and I wonder if the move is to get them eventually all licensed.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, no, all hunting guides are licensed or supposed to be licensed, but we have—well, let me use the scenario of the white-tailed guides, nonresident deer guides. Basically what happens—let me put the scenario where we have a lodge operator who trains maybe three or four guides to guide nonresident Americans or whoever it is that come to hunt deer, and once he has got them trained properly the individual sort of gets cootchie-coo with the nonresident people and he says: Next year, you know what? Instead of going to the lodge and paying big money, why do you not come to my place, and I will sort of take Cliff and Stan out, and you can hunt for a fraction of the cost—and it might not be licensed. So we will be reviewing that end of it.

That is basically under the regional headquarters where we do all the licensing of all guides, whether it is lodges, outfitters, whether it is black bear hunters, moose, they are all licensed through that. That is basically what is referred to. All hunting guides in the province are licensed.

Mr. Struthers: You answered my next question by throwing in the bear guides and all the rest. Do all the rules apply no matter what the species we are talking about then?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Struthers: What would a guide have to go through as far as a procedure in getting or obtaining a license?

Mr. Driedger: The member is getting into an area where we have been having some sensitivity with the lodges and outfitters. Since the time that I took over

the department we have been trying to work very closely with them in terms of making sure that we have proper standards for all our lodges and outfitters, because there is an opportunity to have a gray area among the lodges and outfitters in terms of how they operate. The majority of our lodges and outfitters are just super people, because they deal with non-residents. They are almost tourist ambassadors, but they are not all that way. In all walks of life there is a percentage that by and large maybe push the marginal end of it a little bit in terms of the hunting techniques and in terms principles to some degree. We have been working to try and see—together with the lodges and outfitters group we have formed a committee, because if an outfitter gets caught, depending on the severity of the charge, maybe we should take his licence away.

I just want to tell the member that if you do that to a lodge outfitter, he has to have a million-dollar lodge sitting there. You go and take his licence away, it is going to get very exciting and loud. We have asked the lodges and outfitters people to be involved, to tell us, to work with us as to the severity of the crime or the charge that they are going to be charged with, what would warrant disciplinary action. We have people out there that have as many as 80-some-odd nonresident bear licences. They deal with a lot of Americans, mostly with Americans, and if they do not operate within the guidelines, within proper conduct, it gives a bad eye to the province. We have been working with them.

The member is asking how do we give them a licence. They have to apply in the region, they have to fill out a form, they have to get experienced, first aid, et cetera. Part of this is being reviewed with this committee that we have set up now, based on the participation by the lodges and outfitters. They are very pleased with our setting up of that committee.

Mr. Struthers: So when Cliff and I come to you looking to set up a lodge in northern Manitoba, those are the only criteria that we have to meet then before we get the licence?

Mr. Driedger: No, Mr. Chairman, the difference between getting an outfitters licence or getting a guiding licence is a big, big difference. In an outfitters

licence we get applications, yes, and we have a committee that basically then reviews them. Where do you want to set up your lodge? This is where there is a lot of conflict very often. You have a lodge that basically sells, and then the guy moves a mile down the lake and starts operating again. He has sold somebody his lodge for a million bucks and starts operating on the same lake. I am just illustrating some of the problems and examples that basically we deal with all the time. This is not a rare occasion, this happens. We have all kinds of problems like that.

We have to work together with them, and we have to have input from them in terms of making sure that everybody gets treated fairly. If you and the member for Interlake wanted to make an application, we would take the application, and it would go before a committee. We would first want to see whether you were both reputable people and where you would want to set up your lodge, the type of service that you want to provide. For example, if you would want to set up a lodge in southeast area, my area there, and said you wanted it for nonresident moose licence, that is what you would be catering to, it would not sell because we do not have nonresident moose licences there.

So it has to be some kind of resource that is available in that area and the need is not basically serviced at this time. And we have lots of activity out there so it is not that simple. Getting a licence to operate for an outfitter is a lot simpler than getting an outfitter's licence.

Mr. Struthers: I think you just put the idea in my partner's mind that he is going to build a lodge downstream from me, too. The same rules, then, apply across the province. They do not vary from one region to the next.

Mr. Driedger: No, the rules apply equally across the province but the rules vary, whether it is nonresident bear licences that you are dealing with, because we have guidelines that apply in terms of the baiting process and that you cannot bait on private property and the type of baiting that you do. That is with bears.

Moose licences, again, nonresident moose licence is a little different, just like the nonresident caribou licences, which we are issuing for the first time this

year—nonresident caribou licences, which are, basically, for the lodge owners up close to the Northwest Territories. So different rules apply again, based on certain things, depending on the species that we are dealing with.

Mr. Struthers: Given these times of floods and fires, do the people with lodges, are they expected to carry their own insurance, or is there any money available for compensation if, heaven forbid, they get burnt out?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the lodges and outfitters that are out there in the countryside with substantive investments are responsible for their own insurance. The government does not provide any insurance.

What we do when we have fires, and this always gets to be a little sensitive issue, somewhere along the line a lodge outfitter will phone up and say, listen, there is a fire 10 miles from here. I think it might be coming my way. I want to have equipment and staff, people on standby here at my lodge, in case the fire comes closer.

Well, this is where judgment calls get made by our firefighter veterans in terms of whether it is in danger or not. Certainly we do not ignore them, but it all has to fit into the picture of priorities in terms of saving property. Safety first, property next.

Very often we have some of these lodge outfitters saying, well, instead of worrying about some timber out there in the back 40, I have a big investment here. You better have all your staff here. We try and make fair and reasoned judgment calls. And most of them understand. In fact, they have been out there for a long time. They know the implications of it. They look after many of their own requirements. They have pumps and equipment.

In fact, I was down a few years ago at a lodge, Bolton Lodge, where fire had come, and the individual flew in his own people, set up his own pumps and did his own firefighting, his costs, because at that time there were major problems with many fires, and then if it is a community versus a lodge, you know where we go. Of course, if it is a good stand of timber versus a lodge, we would probably go to the property first, the lodge operation, try and save if at all possible.

* (1540)

As you understand, they are scattered throughout the North. It is pretty costly to take and move crews and equipment in to save a lodge operator. Once we know he is in danger, of course, we will do that, but we cannot do this on a standby basis and because he feels—of course, fires are very erratic. There are so many things that can happen in a forest fire within a day, in terms of the weather movement, the self-generated breeze directions, the heating system of a fire as it goes through the forestry area.

So our people, by and large, have a pretty good feel for it, but so do the lodge operators. They know what the rules are, and the odd time we have a little conflict, but normally it works.

Mr. Struthers: I want to move on to another part of what is written here in the Expected Results under Headquarters Operations. It says that there is—it is kind of unclear, I think. All legitimate claims for livestock killed or injured by hunters are processed. Who determines what is legitimate?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, my NROs, my staff people in the field are the ones that basically would establish that.

Mr. Struthers: Does this statement mean that there is compensation paid to ranchers who have livestock killed?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, that is correct. Where livestock have been killed by hunters in hunting season, they make a complaint, and our staff go out and basically do an assessment. If there is a legitimate claim, then it is paid. Now, if you have a 25-year-old horse that got shot in the back quarter, you probably would not get very much for it, because maybe it was done on purpose or something like that, but we are talking of legitimate claims. This is what our people establish, and we do pay.

Mr. Struthers: I am glad to hear that that is the case. I support compensating farmers and ranchers when their livestock is killed through hunting. My concern was, how do you go about proving that it was a hunter

who actually killed the livestock and trying not to be abused by somebody looking for compensation?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, let me first of all repeat, we pay compensation only in hunting season, not when somebody is poaching. Basically, our NROs, I think, are pretty talented in terms of being able to assess it. If it is deer hunting season and, you know, somebody has lost a beef cow, it has been shot, I do not think there would be too much argument. Somebody shot it during the hunting season. Whether it is done purposefully or not is actually immaterial. They get compensated at that time.

They have a pretty good idea. They work on this all the time. It is not like you or me. We would go out for the first time and say, holy smokes, how did this happen? They are pretty polished individuals in terms of knowing. They can read circumstances together with the farmer. It is surprising. We try to do it on a co-operative basis as well.

Mr. Struthers: I am also interested in knowing, just to further go on with what I was just asking, if my cow is shot and it is in hunting season and the NRO tells me I do not qualify, is there an appeal process that I can go through, or does it just stay at the NRO level?

Mr. Driedger: There is only one appeal process: moi, right here.

Mr. Struthers: Related to this as well, the cattle producers who lose cattle to wolves or to bear, is there any compensation for cattle owners there?

Mr. Driedger: No, Mr. Chairman, there is no compensation available for that. It has been an ongoing debate for many years, where people say, well, there should be some compensation when wolves come and chew up your sheep or cows or calves. Normally we try and deal with the problem. We try and get rid of the problem, but there is no compensation. But it has been an ongoing debate for many years as to whether that should happen or not.

It is not quite that simple to do that because, whether there are dogs, coyotes, fox getting into your chicken coop, as an example, it gets to be very difficult to

always do the proper assessment. You would probably end up with more controversy than you would in terms of solving the problem, so, no, we do not.

Though, again, our people in the field, by and large, if it is really, let us say, a renegade bear, honey keepers are always after the renegade bears. We have now worked things out with the outfitters that we issue special licences for them to take the renegade bears, or our NROs are going to go out and see whether a bear, once they get into the honeybee beehives, can be a real pain. Ultimately we have to take down some of them. So these are, sort of, things that we deal with then if we can.

We also work with them in terms of trying to take corrective measures. We have, for example, the elk problems with the leaf cutter bees, we use equipment that keeps them away, and we have fencing for the beekeepers around their hives, with electric fences. These things work. We have experimental projects that we keep doing all the time to try and help some of these things, but, no, we do not pay.

Mr. Struthers: I suppose then that that would include damage done by the flooding caused by beavers and beaver dams. Farmers would have no recourse to compensation in that area either.

Mr. Driedger: I wish the member had not gotten into beaver stories. I want to take a few minutes just to tell the member what has happened with the beavers in Manitoba, specifically, since the European lobby against the fur industry. Fur prices went down to the point where people or trappers have been not taking beavers because it did not pay. Where the average beaver population was between 300,000 and 400,000 a year, we are at 1.2 million and going through the ceiling, and as a result, we have mega-problems with beavers.

We have a control program that I have entered into with the municipalities in terms of paying a certain amount of money for each beaver taken in the off-season. Fur prices got a little stronger last year so the take was a little stronger for the fur industry. We still have major, major problems. In fact, right now, I think beaver are taking more trees down than our cutters are

out there, you know. The damage every time they have a dam, whether it is close to a road or drainage ditch, problems relate to flooding. They back up the water. Roads are damaged. Fields are flooded.

Farmers are out there shooting beavers and blowing up dams. My people are out there shooting beavers, blowing up dams, and we cannot keep up. It is a losing battle. We do not compensate. However, we have made our staff available to do the removal of certain problem-beavers where it is requested, and where we do not have the program apply, we also have made money available for removal of dams in certain areas, but there just is not enough money to take and basically do a good job on that.

We are hoping that, ultimately, the correction of prices, to some degree, and the program that we have in place should, over a period of the next few years, maybe settle out the problem a little bit. But right now it is a big big-time problem and not just in certain parts of Manitoba, across Manitoba. In fact, we have complaints coming from even in Winnipeg where beavers along the Assiniboine and the Red come out of the river and chew up the shrubbery trees and things of that nature, and people yell at us, and I say, what do you want me to do? Do you want me to kill them? Well, no, they do not want them necessarily killed but do something. Some of them put nets around there. Some of them do all kinds of precautionary measures, but it is a big, mega-time problem.

Mr. Struthers: The reason I bring up beavers is that one of my constituents approached me on this not so long ago who had beaver problems, and he was mad enough to suggest that somebody was paying him a bounty to shoot the beavers, but when an elk came across his land and kicked the daylight out of his grain bin, he was not allowed to shoot the elk. He considered them both pests, and thought that one should be treated the same as the other. He may have a point there. I have no doubt that elk will also end up in his freezer for the winter.

* (1550)

Mr. Driedger: I could try and put the member on the spot and ask him whether he is promoting the idea that

we shoot the elk like we do beaver, but I do not think I want to do that to him necessarily. I would not promote the idea that we—with the elk end of it, this has been an ongoing issue, as well, over a period of time, not as dramatic as the beaver problem, but those people that basically live close to the parks, and where you have elk populations, have been exposed to some of the damage from time to time with a haystack.

It does not just apply to elk, it applies also to white-tailed deer. I have been in the southwest part of the province where big, round bales, and you get 40 or 50 deer in there, and what they do not eat, they ruin so that nothing else will ever eat it. It has been an ongoing problem there. But most of the people that live in these areas, a majority of them, sort of have an understanding of it and live with it to some degree, or from time to time, take their own corrective measures, I guess, which we do not necessarily condone or support that much, but it has been done.

Most individuals that live close to, especially, where the elk herds are, really enjoy the elk. They treat them almost as their own. They are not always happy when the damage is there, but you have individuals that take a different approach and would like to get compensated for all these things. It is one of the things in life that we are not in a position to start paying. We will work with them.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: 2. Regional Operations (a) Headquarters Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,244,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,313,400—pass; (3) Problem Wildlife Control \$272,000—pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$260,000).

2.(b) Northwest Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,935,800. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Struthers: I notice under 12.2(b) that it says, to provide a level of protection from forest fires and floods that is consistent with values at risk. I just need an explanation of what it means by "values at risk." What is playing off one against the other?

Mr. Driedger: You know, sometimes the way staff writes this up, I have trouble following it properly.

Questions, myself, sometimes come to mind, but basically, to provide a level of protection from forest fires and floods that is consistent with values at risk—I am told, for example, that we have fires farther north that do not have maybe the timber value. It comes back to, do we action all fires? Is there a percentage in doing some of this?

The first priority, of course, is safety in terms of addressing floods and fires. The second priority is property at risk, whether it is flooding or fire again, whether we action fires that could endanger, let us see, homes, buildings, livestock, I guess. This would certainly be a priority over, let us say, forestry.

Then within the forestry end of it, we have what we consider very valuable stands which are the pine, black spruce, white spruce, valuable stands versus the more marginal popular, let us put it that way. These are always the things, values at risk, so it is prioritized as to where we would spend the amount of money that we would in terms of flood versus fire.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Let me give the member a bit of a scenario maybe that would help him understand how this works. With the operation of the Shellmouth Dam, we have to make a decision as to how much water we let out at a certain time based on how much water we think is coming in, knowing that when we open it we will be flooding a certain amount of land downstream from the Shellmouth Dam.

How much do we flood, to what extent, when and where? Based on the waters coming in, we have to weigh that against, you know, do we save water and then if it goes over it floods everything anyway? Or do we try and control it? That is sort of where we establish values of risk, to what extent. What is it downstream?

For example, the Town of St. Lazare is going to be flooded to the tune of three or four feet. If we cannot dike it then maybe we should not let that much water go if we cannot control it. I am trying to give the member a bit of a sense of how some of these values and risk judgments get made.

Mr. Struthers: Judging from the answers that I have received so far, I keep getting in my mind a list. I do not know, maybe it is a priorities list with the minister and throughout his department. Number one would be safety, talking about human lives, No. 2 would be properties, buildings and homes and livestock and that sort of thing. The other one that he mentioned was timber. Does agriculture and tourism fall into a list of any kind? Is there a list of any kind?

Mr. Driedger: I was sure that I had provided sort of the guidelines. It is not cast in stone, but guidelines that we use in terms of addressing this. I thought I had made that available to the member, or did you not receive it? Some time ago when he raised these questions, I thought I had made that available. If not, I will then make sure that if you have not got it, we will give you what we call the guidelines in terms of how we prioritize where we protect.

Mr. Struthers: What I received was in terms of a fire question that I had asked a couple of weeks ago. I read that to mean in terms of just fires and where you would attack fires first. I was not aware that included flooding and if there is a list of the different priorities you have.

Mr. Driedger: The member is correct. The information we gave was based on fire. We do not have a prioritized list for flooding, because basically it is common sense.

Very often these things come on us so fast that invariably we set up what we call deputies' committees, and they address the matter of evacuation, property damage, what can be done. Diking, to what extent do we bring in equipment, et cetera, in conjunction with municipalities who always play a very major role in this. They are the basic authority as to whether they designate an emergency situation or not. It is a common sense approach. There is no specific cut guideline as to how we operate.

Mr. Struthers: Thinking back to our discussion yesterday afternoon about advisory boards, I think I have a good understanding of how you go about doing that then. What, though, is the role of public hearings in these kinds of decisions? Is there any role for them

or is it a situation by situation basis on which you and your department make these decisions?

Mr. Driedger: When establishing these advisory committees we try and set up terms of reference, and part of the terms of reference that we invariably work out is that there should be public input of the people affected. If we do not take, and want to ask for public input, let us say we want to take sort of a hush-hush type of thing and just try and do imagery to some degree, then we would set up terms of reference a little differently.

I personally believe that if we are going to go through the problems and the costs of setting up an advisory committee, that the public input is one of the key things, and this is what basically helps alleviate a lot of the problems.

Mr. Struthers: In terms of each of the regions, what I want to get a handle on is who in the department—I do not need names—who in the department, what position, is responsible for gathering data in terms of snow levels and water levels and then turning and forecasting a flood, in each of the different regions?

* (1600)

Mr. Driedger: This would be done through water resources. Through the department we have engineers in each of the regions, together with the regional director, who would be doing the assessments and forwarding the information to central, basically. That is how the process would evolve.

Mr. Struthers: Has it always been the engineers in each of the regions that perform that duty?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, Mr. Chairman, in conjunction with professional people from other provinces as well. All the information basically gets centralized and sorted out, and based on that, recommendations and decisions are made.

So the engineers within the department are always very crucial in terms of getting this information. If they do not give us the right information, it is big-time trouble, and being a layperson I sometimes question

them quite extensively as to whether they know what they are doing in terms of gathering information. By and large they are trained professional people, and ultimately if challenged and if they can justify to myself and to the deputy that they know what they are doing, well, then we base our decisions accordingly.

Mr. Struthers: Within water services, what is the role of the water managers?

Mr. Driedger: I just want to correct the member so that there is not a misunderstanding. There is Water Resources, which is under my department; water services is under Rural Development which basically provides—just note, because it is easy enough to sort of get the two confused. Water Resources basically, which is my people, the engineers, the director of Water Resources, that deal with all the water issues. In your area I believe it is Shorty Levesque. He is considered one of the technicians out there in your area I believe. We rely very heavily on these technicians, that they have the training and the knowledge in terms of being able to provide the kind of information that we require.

Mr. Struthers: We have in each of the regions then water engineers, water managers, and water technicians. I am not clear on what the job description would be for water managers.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the deputy says that we could make that out to be a three-page job description. Water Management basically would deal with the operations of structures in the area. It would deal with the third-order drains for which we have the responsibility in terms of clean-out, whether there has to be replacement of culverts, bridges, et cetera, et cetera, all part of the Water Management.

The levels that we control certain lakes or retention areas where we have structures, Water Management is working also with—an example is Minnedosa where there is a structure there that basically we are working on together with the feds, together with the town and my department in terms of fixing up the structure. Ultimately, we will maintain it, but we will have the Town of Minnedosa operating it.

So when we talk about Water Management, these are just a few of the things, in terms of anything related to water, drainage, retention, whatever the case may be, that is all part and parcel of it. I do not know, I can get technical information on it, but by and large anything to do with water, that is their responsibility. I rely on my people then to say—when I have somebody phoning up and saying, listen, you know, this municipality, they have taken out a culvert or opened a culvert here or put a culvert in and it is flooding. What are you going to do about it?

First of all, I get a hold of my regional people and say, get my water people out there and establish, is it a provincial responsibility. If not, is it a municipal responsibility. If the municipality wants the information, we then have our people take and do an assessment and provide the information to the municipality or to the individual—all part of Water Management. Basically anything to do with water comes under that category, so it is a big-time headache and a big-time job.

Mr. Struthers: I understand and sympathize with the big-time headache comment that the minister made. I am kind of struggling with this right now, and I would appreciate your responses in helping me out. What, then, is the difference between what the engineer does and what the manager does in each of these regions?

Mr. Driedger: I will try again to outline it a little better. Maybe I am not doing a good enough job.

We have five regions throughout the province, and we have regional directors there. These regional directors are each basically responsible for all the activities within their designated geographic area. Under that they have NROs, which are Natural Resources Officers. They have Water Resources people: the water manager, the technician and various components. How many people would we have in our region? Roughly 25 to 30, depending on which area it is. As for the kind of people—for example, in some regions, we might not have any commercial fishing, so we do not have the commercial fishing technicians there, whereas the next region we have. So it is not consistent all the time.

We have the people in there that are required to provide the service for that region based on the requirements for that region, whether it is water, whether it is NROs, whether it is forestry, whether it is commercial fishing. The water resources I mentioned already. The regional director then co-ordinates it. Then we have the director of Water Resources, who has his people in each one of these regions because he is a professional on that.

It is like Harvey Boyle being the ADM responsible for my Natural Resources Officers. Again, in each one of these regions, we have a bunch of NROs. Harvey Boyle, the ADM, is responsible for the activities of the NROs, how they conduct themselves, but the regional director in the member's case is Bob Wooley out of Brandon. That is the regional director; he has to work with the people under him in the various categories and to work with Harvey Boyle, to work with the director of Water Resources, to work with the director of Forestry, depending what it is.

It seems a maybe a little complex, and it did to me to, so I am not being critical of the member in that. It all fits in like a nice puzzle. Everybody knows their responsibility; the chain of command is set up. It covers all the various aspects of it. That is why it is not so simple as in Highways, where you either build the dang road or you maintain it. Here there are many complexities in the Department of Natural Resources, but it all works. It fits well. It has been designed over many years and it fits.

Mr. Struthers: Believe it or not, it is starting to become more clear with me as well. I appreciate the time the minister takes to educate me on this organizational chart of the Department of Natural Resources. In my area of Dauphin, it was mentioned that Shorty Levesque is the water technician. Who in my area would be the water manager?

Mr. Driedger: Berg Wopnford.

My deputy is making reference to the fact that one of our senior people out there passed away very suddenly with a heart attack just a number of months ago in the member's area there, Bob Lawrence.

Mr. Struthers: Who would perform the function of the engineer in that area?

Mr. Driedger: Berg Wopnford is the guy now. I will try and get the spelling for it.

Mr. Struthers: This might start to sound like an Abbott and Costello routine, but who is the manager then?

Mr. Driedger: Berg is both because the position since Bob Lawrence passed away, that position has not been refilled at this point yet.

* (1610)

Mr. Struthers: That is the Western Region?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, that is the Western Region, yes.

Mr. Struthers: So if we were to go through the list of all the regions then, I could get the names of three people in each of those regions who perform the duties of engineers, managers and technicians.

Mr. Driedger: By and large, yes. That would be the structure that is there. Now, from time to time, you have movement, or somebody passes away like in the case of Bob Lawrence, but that would be the concept, basically, that is set up for there.

Now that could vary where, let us say, in some areas, you do not have the pressure on as much as in other areas, so there might be some movement, inter-departmentally, to help out in one area where we have, for example, let us say, in the western region with the flooding of the Assiniboine, we might be bringing in other people there now when an assessment is being done of the damage, et cetera, and, maybe, because we have it very dry at Thompson, maybe we do not need that kind of staffing out there. So, you know, we have that flexibility.

The structure is set up that way, but, by and large, we have flexibility to have movement within the various regions.

Mr. Struthers: Did the goings on with the water manager in the western region, did that have any kind of adverse effect, do you think, on the flood situation that occurred this spring?

Mr. Driedger: Absolutely none whatsoever because irrespective of the fact that we have the structural organization, the five regions and the various components in the various regions, if we run into a pressure situation as we did with the Assiniboine River, to illustrate that again, we have all kinds of people that basically we utilize from other areas, to move them there to address the problem.

That is why you have the director of Water Resources who basically then is the individual who makes the movement in terms of what happens. It is just like, coming back to the fire situation, we have a fire co-ordinator who is looking at all the information that is on the wall, technically, in front of him, who knows and can see in an instant where the fires are, what is happening, where the storms are going, then makes decisions well in advance in terms of movement of staff people from, let us say, from the western region to the eastern region, from north to east.

It is a very fluid and liquid type of arrangement within the department. It is not that cut and dried and rigid. We have the structures there, and that structure basically functions with lots of fluid motion in there to move everything. We have to have the responsibility of the people involved.

Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I did not—the member made reference to the fact that we are having one individual missing and whether this had any bearing on the severity or change in the flood that took place.

I just want to tell the member that the flooding that took place on the Assiniboine this year virtually doubled any record flooding that ever took place on the Assiniboine River. It virtually doubled anything we have ever seen.

So we feel that we managed very well in spite of the severe circumstances we were under. We had something like 800,000 acre feet that came into the

system, when the capacity of the Shellmouth Dam, for example, is 370,000 acre feet, so the member can imagine what happened.

We were trying to jockey with the Shellmouth Dam. We were jockeying with the Portage diversion, moving water from there into Lake Manitoba, until we had a capacity there, moving water out at the Fairford Dam which anticipated a certain amount of flooding with the reserves down there, and controlling the water flowing down the Assiniboine, so that we had minimum disruption and damage on property.

We did a remarkable job. I feel very good about the job that our people basically did, because we really jockeyed and made some call shots. If we would have had a three- or four-inch rain any time during these decisions, our whole arithmetic would have been thrown out the window, so to speak. We would have had major problems on top of the fact that we had an all-time double record flood this time.

The member made reference as to whether that one position had made a difference. No. We moved a lot of resources into there to make sure that we did everything that had to be done in terms of dealing with the structures. This is where water managers come in again.

The operation of the Shellmouth Dam, the operation of the Portage diversion, the Fairford Dam, these people are charged with that responsibility. If they make mistakes, then I get it. Then it comes to me and we have to make decisions.

It affects people's lives dramatically, and if we do not make the right decisions, government is liable. Everybody that is in the system knows this really well. We have people who have been there 25, 30 years. They know full well the implications of it and understand the situation. You have to rely on people like that to give advice.

A new minister gets in there, and you are not going to change the system and start making people make decisions other than the right decisions for whatever reason. That is always the challenging part, an educational thing that people like myself, as well as the

member now, as a new member, gets exposed to, to find out exactly the goings on and how things operate. It is a great experience.

Mr. Struthers: Was the position of water manager cut in 1990?

Mr. Driedger: The member asked whether we have capped the water management position since 1990?

Mr. Struthers: I asked, was the position of water manager in these regions, was that cut in 1990.

Mr. Driedger: I want to try and explain something to the member now, that over a period of years, during our government though, when my predecessor, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), was responsible for Natural Resources, there were major revisions that basically took place in the Department of Water Resources, in the department as a whole but specifically in Water Resources, where we had a very big, at least perceived to be big, engineering staff and very little capital money to do any projects, and it was considered to be top heavy with engineers.

So there was a total reorganization in terms of Water Resources, I guess in the 90s, between '89 and 1990, in that area. A major realignment took place within the Department of Water Resources. Of course, that created a lot of anxiety among municipalities which perceived that the requirement was always there for water projects, water works, et cetera, but we have basically learned to function with what is available to us and are trying to do the best job we can related to municipalities and to the individuals, as well.

I would not have it available to me in terms of the exact figures as to how the adjustments took place, but I have always been very supportive of the Department of Natural Resources, and I felt that it probably took maybe a bigger than ordinary chunk of some of the readjustments that took place within government at a certain time, but, of course, it is very hard to fight against increased spending in the Health, Education and Family Services part of it.

Many of the other service departments like Highways and Natural Resources, Agriculture, were the

departments that carried the brunt end of it and bit the bullet there for a while. Yes, adjustments took place, but to what extent, I do not know. I do not have that information here.

(Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Struthers: Was part of the realignment the loss of the position of water manager in these regions?

* (1620)

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to, sort of, give the member some comfort that there is nothing dramatic that took place. Under the readjustment, it was felt that we—and we feel that way today—are still doing the job, maybe doing it a little differently than it was done before with the tremendous amount of staff. The water management position, to me, is meaningless, really, as long as we, through Water Resources, through our people, the technicians, engineers, get the job done that is required from us. I do not know whether the water management position that was or was not deleted in 1990 has a big bearing on how we operate.

I can, they can check to see whether it is, but if the member, if there is something that he feels concerned about, if he wants to give me the specifics, I will check it out. But I do not think it really affects as to how we operate five years later now within the department. I make do with what I have and try and make things work as best we can with the municipalities.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Struthers: The problem that I am having is that 10 minutes ago I was told that there was a water manager in the western region, and now when I ask if the position had been laid off, it seems like the possibility was that that position was laid off. Why would I be told there is a manager in the western region by the name of Bob Lawrence and an engineer in the area by the name of Berg—whoever you were talking about?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I am going to check with staff to see whether I can clarify or get a comfort

level for the member. I have tried to outline what the structure, the basic structure is in the various regions, and the fact that one of our people passed away and that we have not filled the position yet does not mean that it is cut. The position is still there. We are very protective and make sure we do not lose those positions. I do not have that here right now, but if the member wants that, I can sort of give him a structure of the region.

Mr. Chairman, I am trying to establish whether there is a concern here for the member. I can try and get the structural setup for each region, but it varies for each region. I have to go back and outline, possibly, 1,200 to 1,500 people that are within my system, how the system works in terms of getting to where the member, basically, is wanting, or I can be specifically for the Western Region, try and see what people we have in the area of the Water Resources, people that do the work for me, if that is acceptable. I am trying to do—but I hope the member is not asking me to give him a breakdown of the detailed staffing throughout each one of my regions. It is pretty substantive.

Mr. Struthers: Before he died, was Mr. Lawrence the water manager in the western region?

(Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Driedger: Maybe it is a matter of use of words. My deputy tells me that we have people with positions that do the water management in the area, but they do not necessarily have a title of water management. Maybe this is where we have some confusion. We have so and so many people doing certain things related to water, to the various resources that we have, and Mr. Lawrence was the water manager in that area. It did not necessarily mean that he had that title of water manager, or that we had deleted the position of a water manager. Maybe that will help to clarify the confusion to some degree.

Mr. Struthers: I think we are getting somewhere then. So it is Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Berg—whoever that name is—and Mr. Levesque in the western region, who, at one time, were in charge of finding out how much water and snow there was before the water and snow melted into the rivers. There were three people—an

engineer, a manager and a technician then at one time—who were responsible for doing that. When Mr. Lawrence passed on, that left two people to do it. My information tells me, though, that in 1990 the position of water manager was axed, leaving two people then in 1990 performing those duties. That does not add up with what I am hearing today in which it is being portrayed as simply somebody dying and not being replaced yet. That is where the confusion is.

Mr. Driedger: I will give the member an undertaking that we will go back to that point where there was some reorganization, and give some indication as to the figures and how many people we had dealing with water resources in whatever capacity in the western region. If he can find that acceptable, I will try and give him an outline there, as long as I do not have to do it for every region. Just so that he has a comfort level as to how the readjustment took place. The member is concerned about the forecasting, how it was done, with technicians and engineers that we had available to us. It is not just that two people would be making that decision. It would also be the regional director involved. It would also be a fellow like Dr. Merlin Shoesmith. There would be a raft of people involved that bring information forward. Then an assessment is done in terms of predicting how much precipitation is there and whether we are going to experience a flood or no flood.

I am trying to understand where the member has concerns. I am trying to allay those concerns by saying that I feel very comfortable that we have the qualified people out there, irrespective of whether they are called water managers or are water managers, water resources, technicians, whatever the case may be. We have the necessary people there that feed the information forward for decision making in terms of making predictions as to whether we will have a flood or not. If this is the area, I will try and get that level back to him somewhere along the line. We will take and check to see exactly what has happened in terms of people within the department of Water Resources in the western region so that he can track it whichever way he wants.

Mr. Struthers: My concern, too, is that the cut that took place in 1990 did not just occur in the western

region, but that all water managers in each of the regions were cut at that time. Do I have a legitimate concern there?

Mr. Driedger: Without going into details, I could well envision that under the reorganization there were water managers, or whether they called them, whatever name they wanted to give them—under reorganization there were a whole swat of them that were deleted and removed at that time when reorganization took place in 1990. There were dramatic changes that took place.

Now titles, whether titles mean anything, water manager or water supervisor or technician, but that is why I am going to give him a bit of a flow for that area. But it was not just the western region, it went across the whole department of Water Resources. The whole Department of Natural Resources was reorganized.

We used to have, I do not necessarily want to give the member a total history lesson now, but there used to be under the NROs, for example, we had fish specialists, we had wildlife specialists, we still have some of them.

But our NROs were in different categories. We had forestry people that were running down the road and behind him ran the wildlife guy, and behind him ran the fisheries guy, you know, in their different vehicles, because they all had their responsibilities.

Ultimately, it was reorganized where the NROs have all the responsibilities. It was quite a change, and this was years ago when it took place. It makes for much more efficient operations, and that is why our NROs are not just enforcers either, they are also public relations people in terms of running our parks, running our wildlife programs, our fisheries programs, forestry, they basically do it all. They have the training for it.

* (1630)

At one time it did not used to be that way. They had the training but everyone was specialized in a certain area. So over the years a lot of history has changed in this very important Department of Natural Resources. This is what has happened with the water end of it too. Just to maybe illustrate, we will get that information,

just so the member has a sample of what happened in one region, but that happened across the province.

Mr. Struthers: I do not intend to go through each of the regions and ask you for names of different staff people in different positions, but I want to do it for the northeast region. Could you tell me who the water manager is, the water technician and the water engineer?

Mr. Driedger: I apologize, I was not following—for the northeast region, which would be basically the Thompson area, the member confuses me to some degree when he talks water managers. I am talking of people who manage water, and technicians. Is the member asking for a breakdown of the northeast region? He wants one for the western, and I promised him one for the western region. He wants a breakdown of the Water Resources people in the northeast region. Can we clarify? I wish the member would not put titles on these people because titles do not mean anything to me and I do not think mean anything to the department.

My deputy tells me we have no water engineers, Water Resources engineers in Thompson.

Mr. Struthers: The reason why I am asking these questions is that earlier when I was looking for a bit of an education on what positions there are in the area of forecasting floods, I was told that there were three titles in the regions, and one of them was water manager.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairperson, then I want to apologize, I have given the wrong impression. The member is putting titles on things and I am looking at water managers, not necessarily a water manager position type of thing. I also indicated that when we had our structures that we have it for each region, and that is the basic structure, but that we do not necessarily have the same component in each one.

For example, we would not have commercial fishing in the eastern region, would we? We would not have the commercial fishing component in there. We have more tourism there versus the commercial fishing, whereas in certain areas we have more requirement for water. At the time when the hydro developments were taking place, we had components move forward into

the Thompson area because that was the area, the Northeast Region, where they would then be very actively involved, and we would probably have half a dozen there.

So the basic structure is there and within the department we take and move people into the various categories. So if the member says, well, I said there should be three of these in the northeast region, then I apologize. That is not really how it is. We have the provision for that.

There could be six as well, but the structure is there to take and address all the requirements, such as there are at a certain time. I want to repeat again that, for example, along the Assiniboine River during the time of the stress and the flooding that took place, we had lots of people out there. The same thing applies, for example, with the May long weekend when we opened the provincial parks. We had the extreme rowdyism that took place over the many years, and, ultimately, we put in a liquor ban. But we would bring people—we would have an extra 30-40 people that we brought in from across the province where things were quieter. We brought them into the problem spots. We do the same thing with fires; when the fires move from the western side to the eastern side, we move a whole raft of people. We are very fluid and liquid with movement of people to the various responsibilities.

I know the member has a fixation—not fixation. I should not say it that way, but he has the idea that these are all frozen in one spot like that, in one region. That is not the case at all. We have the regions and we have the chain of command that is there, but we could take and bring in—the regional director, by and large, could bring in 10 people, 10 engineers, from wherever if he had the requirement for a certain period of time and be out again in a month's time, or six months or a year.

I am trying to explain and get the member to understand that the department is not that cut-and-dried. The only thing that is cut-and-dried is in my office. I am the minister. I have two executives, and I have three staff people in the office. That is cut-and-dried. That does not change too much, except when the deputy walks in. The deputy has his people. Out in the regions there is so much activity, such a diversified

activity that the figures are not always constant out there.

Maybe it would be beneficial if I could take and, for the member's benefit, establish how many people we have working in the department of Water Resources and how many we have in the regions, sort of just to get a bit of a feel for it. It might be helpful for the member so that he can see how many people we have, lest he feel that we only have two or three. We still have lots of people, so I am going to try and gather more information by the time we meet next. If the member then wants to take and ask for additional information, I will take and embellish on that further to that. Maybe that would help solve some of the concerns that he has.

Mr. Struthers: Just to sort of finish off the question I had for the Northeastern Region, the Thompson area. You said there were no water engineers, and I can just take from that that there is no such thing as a water manager there or a water technician?

Mr. Driedger: That is correct, at the present time.

Mr. Struthers: I think, then, what I need to establish is that before this realignment in the Department of Natural Resources in 1990, were there then positions called water manager, water engineer, water technician in each of the regions?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, without going into a tremendous amount of research and work on that, I will try and get a bit of a snapshot as to what circumstances were prior to reorganization so that the member can maybe get a feel for how we—but, as I said, this has happened five years ago. We can see whether—not that it makes much difference, because good, bad or otherwise, the changes have taken place. Basically, I am dealing with what I have now and try and provide the service. If the member wants a case history, I will try and get some of the case history for him, as much as I can, but he cannot even be critical of me, you know. It has been done five years ago, and I do not really care. What I am doing is working with the people that I have and trying to provide a service for the municipalities, but I will try to get some information so that you have a bit of a snapshot.

Mr. Struthers: I will promise not to be too critical. I think that is all the questions I have on Northwest Region.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Item 12.2, 2. Regional Operations (b) Northwest Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,935,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$634,700—pass.

2.(c) Northeast Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,937,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$869,700—pass.

2.(d) Central Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,118,500.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): I would appreciate a little bit of time on the Central Region, being that it does entertain my constituency of Interlake. A few questions for the minister with regard to water resources in this region and projects—the minister was written by the LGD of Armstrong, requested by the LGD of Armstrong, what the problem was with the Walker Drain licensing approval within that jurisdiction. Can the minister enlighten me?

* (1640)

Mr. Driedger: If I am correct, this is the issue that the member raised with me the other day, about a licence that had not been issued, and, as a result, the municipality could not undertake the drainage under the Infrastructure program. I have not the detailed information, but my understanding is that there are some problems in terms of the complications, if they do that drainage work, of the downstream effect of it, according to the preliminary report I have. I am looking for the detailed report, because there is some concern that the department has attempted to take and issue the licence until there is a clear understanding of what the impact will be downstream from that. I do not have the detailed information on that because I would like to have more specific information as to whom it affects downstream. I have put that request in to the department. I will be expecting an answer shortly.

Mr. Clif Evans: In the letter to the minister from the LGD of Armstrong, again, with respect to a meeting

that was held between the minister and the Intermunicipal Drainage Committee on December 12, 1994, speaking to the Reeve yesterday, when he passed this letter on to me, he has indicated that there still has been no response to their request with respect to the concern of Netley Creek. Can the minister enlighten me on that?

Mr. Driedger: I am trying to recall. I understand there was some concern that we had not informed them as to what was happening with Netley Creek. At the time, when we met with the—it was not just the one municipality; it was a group, basically, that came forward and talked about a variety of drainage projects, at which time I had mentioned that it would be in the intention of the government to take and start from the mouth of the Netley Creek and start working back, because there is major—if you do not have the outlet, by and large, and much work has to be done, my understanding is, from our staff people, that we have done design work, that we are ready to do some preliminary work.

Mr. Chairman, without putting things on the record that I would have to retract tomorrow, I would like to ask the member if he would let me just wait with this information tomorrow. I will check my records, because I know I had information on it. I do not have it here, and I do not want to recall off the top of my head, because we have many water projects throughout the province, and I just want to make sure I update myself properly on this particular one.

Knowing the full implications of the Netley project, basically, it is like an octopus. We have the main channel here, and all the municipalities are feeding into it, and we had said that we would—and it is a tremendous cost to do the project, the portion that is our responsibility, and we wanted to move forward with it.

I have to say that I had asked the government, my government to allow us to put more money into water resources and drainage capital programs, because they have approximately 50 megaprojects. What I consider megaprojects are projects that are in excess of a million dollars plus, throughout the province, that are in need of attention, and we have been sort of nickel-and-

diming many of these projects. We have done design work. We have done acquisition in some cases and then started piecemeal working at some of these things, trying to spread the few dollars that we have in my capital program for water resources as far as we can. It is not really adequate. I am hoping that I will be more successful in terms of being able to get more money into the capital programs. It has been very frustrating.

During the drought years, the issue was not as dramatic. What has happened in the last two years, all of a sudden we have normal rainfalls, in some cases above-normal rainfalls, and now all those drains that by and large municipalities and, I guess, government allowed to blow in and grow in, all of a sudden are major problems, and we are scrambling to do as much as we can in terms of interim work, but we are really not getting too much done on the major megaprograms.

That is why I would try and have an update for the member by tomorrow on the Netley, to be specific on that. And I will also check why, as the member says, I have not responded, because—maybe I can just clarify that for both members—by and large when requests come in I review them and send them down to staff, as a rule, to ask for clarification and updating and drafting a response, and then I just assume that this automatically will happen. It does not mean that sometimes from time to time something has not dropped in the cracks, and I will just check that out.

Mr. Clif Evans: I want to bring up a concern with the minister and a request through resolution. I would like to put it on record. I am sure, being as busy as we all have been in the last month or two, just to let the minister know that the letter and resolution was only forwarded a month ago, May 15, but it is a concern that the R.M. of Bifrost has brought to the attention of the regional people that the Laufus bridge, in their correspondence to me and the—[interjection] L-a-u-f-u-s, north 35-22-3E over the Icelandic River. They are requesting, of course, that it be replaced as soon as possible. There are road restrictions on that bridge. It is a main transportation route.

Has the minister's department made an effort—what effort have they made to assist the municipality with this request?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, on the specific bridge here, the Laufus stream, the Icelandic bridge and the request to replace it, I might tell the member that I am not belittling the request from his area there, but one of the biggest problems that is being faced by my department as well as the Department of Highways and Transportation is that all the hundreds and actually thousands of bridges that were built at one time, many of them wood structures have come to the point where, because of the increased loads, just by itself the kind of vehicles that are basically using the bridges, many of them are restricted and invariably before they get restricted the heavy loads get on there and help deteriorate the bridges a lot faster than it would have been done at the time when they were built.

The problem that both Highways and myself face is the fact that to replace these structures, whether it is with covered crossings or ford crossings, whatever the case may be, is a very slow process. That is why when, during the time I had the privilege of being the Minister of Highways and Transportation, I developed the bridge program within the department, cost-shared with the municipalities. It started off as a pilot project, I guess. I was very pleased, we managed to do some good projects.

Even in the member's area out there we did that. In fact, I thought we actually opened one together, did we not? One of the pains that happened and some of the revisions that took place within the department, the bridge program and Highways got put on hold.

This department here, I am encouraging very strongly that that program should be back on the docket. From our perspective we have so and so much money, not belittling the requests that come in. It is a matter of their prioritizing in terms of economic impact, the life impact on some of the people. We try and set up priorities and move forward as fast as we can.

I have to tell the member that we are losing the war, so to speak. We just cannot catch up fast enough in terms of replacement of structures that are all being limited in terms of access. We try and amalgamate in some cases. People have to travel further distances to get across in certain crossings, whereas we used to have a crossing every mile, half-mile in some cases.

We just have not got enough money to keep replacing them, so we do it on as close as we can to a priority basis to try and deal fairly with people in the various areas. I am just giving the member some background. On this specific one I will have to check exactly to see whether we are in a position to do anything to that and how we will respond to that.

I have to say, though, that I hope that basically our government together with the federal government will ultimately again maybe develop some infrastructure program as we had last year, because many municipalities took advantage of the infrastructure program in terms of updating their own drainage, because now they spend 33-cent dollars in the municipalities instead of taking the whole shot. With the provincial government picking up a third and the feds picking up a third, many municipalities took advantage of it and got a lot of their projects which they would not have done now.

I would like to see this being grouped forward by our government. Of course, you have the other provinces as well, but I think it was a good program where we now have a sharing arrangement and many things that individually we could not do or the feds would not do or the municipalities could not do could now be undertaken.

* (1650)

That would maybe help alleviate some of the pressures that I am facing with the reconstruction of bridges.

Mr. Clif Evans: A project that has been on the books or on the promise or on the maybe or on the we-will-see category perhaps is the Washow Bay drainage program. It was brought up at some debates during our campaign time this previous election and of course in 1990. I was not that much aware of it in 1990, being new to the area, but the previous Minister of Natural Resources, this minister can go back or I can provide him records of Estimates and Question Period asking the minister about the Washow Bay drainage project.

The municipality has it as a priority, Bifrost. Is there something that we can go back to the community and

say that, yes, we are going to be doing something in the very near future with the Washow Bay? This is Phase 2. It has been years. I have been promised and so has the municipality that it will be undertaken.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, maybe some of the background, it was not the previous Minister of Natural Resources that basically initiated the Washow Bay project to quite a degree, it was the minister before, namely, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), who was then the Minister of Natural Resources who basically undertook substantive work to some degree at that time. That was at the time too, of course, when there was more money available at that time within the department for capital works under Water Resources.

The project, I am well aware of the project. This is one of the, when I made reference to the 12 to 15 bigger projects that we have outstanding there that we are sort of not paying lip service but very little more than lipservice. In the Washow Bay case I think we are undertaking certain culvert installations. I think we are doing a little bit of further acquisition of right of way.

Again, like I say, I have my list, you know, and I do not want to confuse myself or the member in terms of exactly—but I believe this is the case, along with the other one that he made reference to me, I am going to take and bring him an update on this, because I believe monies were expended.

The frustrating part I find is that by doing it piecemeal like this it will be like the twinning of Highway 75; it will be a 25-year project. That is the way they get some of these things done. I really do not like that. I would rather get one project done and then move onto the next one.

This piecemeal thing is sort of a painful process, both for municipalities as well as myself. I am hopeful that I am still going to be successful for the future, either myself or whoever is going to be in this chair, to take and see whether we can get more money into the capital requirements for these kind of projects because, whether it is the Netley or whether it is the Washow Bay, that is only two in the member's area, and I can go through and probably pick another two in your area that are of major importance.

What is that lake called, the one that we talked about—Dennis Lake, another one there. Now we are up to three major ones within the member's area, and then I think you have some other municipalities that we are talking about, aside from the bridges that the member has.

We are talking of only his riding. I can take him across the province and show him endless ones. For myself it is very discouraging I suppose knowing the kind of things that have to be undertaken out there and how much can you do. Here again I will specifically get the information.

I think we allocated certain funds, but out of the 15 mega, bigger projects that we have—I should not call them megaprojects. They are not really megaprojects, but they are bigger projects within the department, megaprojects I guess. I know that we are addressing some to a small degree, and then the money is gone. Some of them do not even get touched, and that is the frustrating part of it. That is aside from all the structures that are coming at me.

I am sure that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) as well as the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) along the mountain sections there have major concerns with what has happened. What happened is—what is it, two years ago when we had that washout when I was still in Highways? You have a high rainfall up in the hills, the water rushes down, it takes out every crossing that there is. So that takes care of one-year's budget in a heck of a hurry, you know.

This is the difficulty that I have. That is certainly not belittling the fact that there are many, many projects, very worthwhile projects that would be economically beneficial to municipalities and to the constituents that we, I would like to do and cannot do.

I will get him an update as to the amount of monies that are being expended on these two projects.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for that response.

In doing some research on the Washow Bay project, I was informed that in fact some years ago—not too

many, but some years ago—there were, within the department, monies available for the next phase. Where it went, I do not know. If that is the case, then what bigger priority—if there was that money available, where did the money go?

Mr. Driedger: That is sort of a vague shot because I cannot justify the decisions that were made, but I believe the member is correct that there was some kind of commitment made in terms of proceeding on a priority basis. Then I believe that, when funding was cut within the department, all of a sudden everything had a different perspective.

Now, if there ever was that money on the table for the project or not, I can only go by hearsay. The member is going by hearsay as well, and that will not change anything. If there was money and it is gone, it is gone. All I can say is that I am receptive to seeing whether we can get more funding and see whether we can get some of these projects moving forward.

I do not like to leave them that way. It is a very fertile area out there. It is a progressive area out there, and over the years they have had dramatic flooding situations out there. I think those people are entitled to be given consideration just like anybody else across the province.

That is why I will give him an update because I know, I believe, and I want to confirm that with both the Netley project and the Washow Bay project some monies are being expended. Then I will also give the member the list of the ones outside of this area that are not getting anything just so that you have a sense of fairness here along the line.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I can just relay to the minister that I have been told that same story for four and a half years already—

Mr. Driedger: To me it is sort of new.

Mr. Clif Evans: A new story for this minister, yes, but it is just story No. 1 or story No. 2. I have heard all the stories.

Mr. Driedger: How long have you been here?

Mr. Clif Evans: Four and a half years and asking the same thing. So, yes, I would like to see and appreciate the minister getting back. It is a request from the municipality directly, too. I am just not getting on a pedestal myself and asking to gain points; I am saying that this is a request.

First of all, further down in Estimates under Fisheries, is the minister planning to have staff come in for that area, or can I ask some fishing questions under Central Region?

Mr. Driedger: What staff you see is what I have now and for the rest of the Estimates. You can ask me anything you want. If you want to get into Fisheries, you can go at it right now. This is sort of the way I decided that we would operate.

My deputy and my resource person here, Lou Podolsky, director, and if I cannot get the information from these two people who are basically responsible for the money spending end of it, then I will undertake the information to get it back. So you can ask me questions on Fisheries if you want. I assume it has to do with commercial fisheries.

* (1700)

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: For the benefit of committee I would just remind the committee that at the outset of the Estimates we did agree to go line by line rather than to address all the issues. What is the will of the committee?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I know it is going to drive you nuts, but I do not care. I mean, we will deal with it whichever way the critics want. Basically the minister, in my view, is responsible to answer questions, and whether they answer them on line by line or all at one time and pass the whole thing, I do not really care. I will deal with the issues as they bring them forward. So it is up to them how they want to do it.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to proceed in general discussion? Is it the will of the committee to proceed? Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for that.

Some years ago, I believe back to '92—it was before this minister's time—there were some situations had occurred on Lake Winnipeg fisheries, some requests made by different area fishermen to test or use smaller-mesh nets during a specific time of the fishing year. Some problems came out of that at that time in '92. The idea of areas of boundaries, it is an ongoing thing. I think the minister has been contacted, this minister has been contacted, and actually I, too when I was Natural Resources critic. I had a lot more information passed on to me, of course.

I would like some clarification from the minister. In '92, the whitefish fisheries situation was in trouble because of the poor, low cost of whitefish. The situation arose, I believe, that at that time—and if I am wrong I stand to be corrected by the minister—there was a quota that the whitefish operators were able to fish pickerel, sauger to a certain limit to offset the low cost of whitefish. Now, we are all aware that the quotas for whitefish are approximately 35,000 pounds.

Can the minister enlighten me? First of all, after the situation in '92 where the costs were so low for whitefish, was there anything put in place to allow the whitefish fisheries to catch more on their quotas than the 5,000 pounds, at that time? Were they allowed to offset, for a year or whatever, the low cost of whitefish? Was that implemented at all?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, this is going to be a bit of a lengthy answer, because this is not a simple problem. The member is well aware of the tremendous amount of history that is involved with the commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg and the various components that are involved here. The whitefish fishery which basically I think is down to eight or 10 fishermen basically is what they consider the big whitefish fleet that used the five-inch mesh. At the time when the markets went down, it made the request for a short period of time to have the mesh size reduced to four-and-three-quarter inch.

I am just going to go through a little bit of a history here. What happened is that once the whitefish market

improved again, the commercial fishermen were loath to go back to the five-inch fishery. We had the Grand Rapids group, when we made the decision last year that we would now go back to the five-inch mesh size, raise concerns that they had invested money into the four-and-three-quarter, that they wanted to continue using it until it was sort of used up, at least another season. So we capitulated and allowed them to do that.

This spring, we had the same request saying well, they wanted to still use the four-and-three-quarter ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, and we did that again. Correct? We have allowed them to use the four-and-three-quarter again with ultimately wanted to go back to the five-inch. I say that only as some of the background.

The member is aware of the various fishing groups around the lake that have certain areas whether it is Berens River, whether it is Grand Rapids, whether it is Poplar River, whether it is at Long Point. Over a period of time, if you want to look at the history of Lake Winnipeg and the various elements on there, fishing areas were established for each area so and so many miles this fish zone, so many miles that way. It is the smaller fleets basically that are fishing; they do not get into the big lake that much.

The big fishing fleets say that the smaller operators, the ones that have these limits with three and three-quarter inch—that they are exceeding way past their limit in the area that they have been designated. The people in these designated areas with the three-and-three-quarters say they want to have their limits extended, and that the people that basically are the whitefish fishery, you know, the poundage that they have, are basically catching pickerel and not whitefish.

Accusations are flying a mile a minute, hot and heavy, and requests are coming down to me on an ongoing basis of we want to expand our area for the three-and-three-quarter. Everybody is suspicious of everybody else getting the advantage you see, and I am sitting in the middle here getting a little nervous with this whole thing.

So the decision by and large that I have made, and just within the last two weeks, I guess, that I want to have an impartial review done of the whole lake

because I cannot knee jerk and start giving Berens River a further quota or Norway House, who now want to take and have a quota outside of the Playgreen area, and they have some quota there, plus we have allowed the transaction people to sell quotas among themselves.

What has happened is one community buys from the other, and then the rest of them say, well, what about our community? We have sold out. You know, we need more quota now, but they allow it to be sold because it is an individual decision anyway, somewhere along the line, in some cases. Then you have the co-operative element in there that basically says, we need quotas for our area to keep this fish plant going and to keep our people going, you know, we need more quota. In the meantime, the individuals go and sell it to the next community because they get a good buck for it and then come and ask me to produce more fish and more quota.

I am giving this just as a bit of an insight into the problems that I am facing out there with the fishermen. What has happened over the years, as political pressure came down, irrespective of the government of the day or the minister of the day, decisions were made saying, okay, we will allow you to have a three-and-three-quarter-inch fishery here. You go five miles from this point to five miles into here and three miles that way. This is where you can fish, and the spawning rivers, there is a controlled area of about half a mile, a mile, whatever the case may be, where you can fish.

Well, we are to that point now where we have people that want to fish in the spawning rivers, which again creates problems for me because I have a very strong feeling about protecting our spawning rivers. I mean if we do not start looking after protecting the resource, and you know without this being a reflection on the commercial fishermen, but if we do not have some management tools in place, we are going to have that resource depleted and nobody will be able to fish anything.

There has to be some management system set up. I cannot do that on the basis of Norway House coming and saying we need; Berens River saying we want to expand; Grand Rapids saying we need this; at a time when I am starting to work and develop the fish

hatcheries throughout the province in conjunction with these fishing groups.

It is always on a share basis that I am setting those up. I think we have got four or five in the mix where we do fish hatcheries. I am very high on this. I think we are trying to tie-in the sports fishing as well as the commercial element of it as it is very successful. I am very high on that, but that is only a drop in the bucket.

* (1710)

If you consider that we allow our spawning rivers to be taken and decimated by people having nets in there during spawning time and taking them not for spawn but supposedly for private use. They have the right to take for sustenance. Unless we all start accepting responsibility, we will deplete the resource, and then there is not going to be a problem anymore.

So I say this is back on; when the member started asking me about commercial fishing and some of the problems with it, I wanted to tell him the problems that I am facing with that, aside from the sport fishery, which I would like to get in somewhere along the line too. If he will ask me a question, I will give him an hour on that one.

Aside from that, there are major problems. This is only Lake Winnipeg we are talking about. Then we have Lake Manitoba that we have to talk about. Then we have to have Lake Winnipegosis, which the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is going to be excited about the things that happen out there. Then we have the Island Lake people who basically are dealing with FFMC and federal Minister Tobin in terms of being excluded and getting the rights to have representation on FFMC elected and having all the rough fish removed from the FFMC.

Does the member get the idea of what is going on out there? This is why I made a decision that we are going to have an independent study done, and not the long one. I need to know by fall because decisions have to be made. We will make a decision and see whether we can get some rhyme or reason into this thing because I am shadowboxing with every group that comes in that have their own wishes, and nobody trusts each other

out there. They do not trust me either. I say that tongue-in-cheek; I do not mean it that way.

No, they come and they have concerns. I cannot deal with it ad hoc. I have my Fisheries people out there that basically give advice, but the feeling from the individuals out there or the groups out there is they hold my people suspect in terms of how decisions get made. So we need to have a different snapshot view of this so that we can deal with not one community at a time, but the general picture in terms of what we do.

That is what I am going to try and accomplish, and we hope to have a system in place very shortly. We will be tendering the project shortly; and, once we have that, a decision will be made, a selection will be made, and terms of reference are going to be outlined.

I would expect that the report should come back to me. This is not a two-year hideaway. This is going to be a movement action in terms of getting results back. We are looking at having results back by fall some time, so decisions can be made because I have put some of these people off, specifically saying, I am going to do this. I have given an indication that we will do an impartial review of it and that I will be able to make decisions by this fall. That is an undertaking.

Having said that, what was the next question?

Mr. Clif Evans: You did not answer the question that I asked, but I thank the minister for some history lesson on it. Even though I may be new to the commercial fishing area, I have spoken and heard a lot in the last five years about commercial fishing from all different people, from all different areas, so I appreciate that.

I asked the minister specifically, and he answered kind of partly. He told me that the whitefish fisheries are still allowed to use four-and three-quarter inch. They are not required to use five-inch. There are no regulations on the five. I also asked the minister that three years ago when the whitefish fisheries were in trouble with finances as far as the price of the whitefish, were they allowed at that time through any ministerial statement or through the Fisheries department or anywhere allowed to fish more than 5,000 pounds of their 35,000 pound quota?

Mr. Driedger: The member is correct correct that when the price for the whitefish market dropped then there was provision made to use four-and-three-quarter instead of the five-inch. The decision as to whether they could take and fill up their quota with a requirement with pickerel was made long, long before that, and that has always been a sensitive issue.

That is why the people in the outlying areas that have fish areas that are fishing with three-and-three-quarter are accusing the whitefish fleet, so to speak, of catching pickerel and not catching the whitefish. This is another part of that whole puzzle and problem that is out there.

But that decision was not made at the time when the reduction in the gill size from five to four-and-three-quarter was made. That decision to allow them to catch pickerel or to fill up their quota with pickerel was made long, long before that, I am told. Possibly my deputy should know, he used to be one of the commercial fishermen out there. It does not make it easy for me to have had a deputy that has been involved in the commercial fishery who believes he knows all the answers, but I do not really necessarily agree. So there is so much history in the whole commercial fishing end of it both on Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba.

The member does not want to talk about Lake Manitoba, not right now, so there is, when I look at the history of it, it is worse than farming; it is worse than supply management in farming. This is really something, so for that reason, rather than stumble into this thing and start making ad hoc decisions, I repeat, we are going to get as much information as we can, hopefully get good recommendations and then make decisions that I think will probably be able to address the concerns of all these people.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister, and please bear with me. From what you are telling me, what I am asking, you are saying to me, and this question and that answer that you gave me has never, ever come up before to me, that the whitefish fleets quotaholders were able to fill their quotas with anything else but whitefish to a 5,000-pound limit. I have never ever, ever heard that from anybody, and I could be wrong. I have not heard from anybody that they, years ago or whatever—I want to just clarify

something. I am as concerned about the whitefish fishery and the trouble that they are having with prices and everything else as any other fisherman.

I just want clarification on the rules and the regulations—four-and-three-quarter for how long? Five-inch, when is it coming back, if it is? And really, is it there somewhere that says, 35,000 pounds under your quota, you can catch 35,000 pounds of pickerel, sauger alone to offset, or is it 5,000

Mr. Driedger: Well, the member is correct. I will start back with the mesh size. I gave in again this spring as I did last fall and have allowed them another year to use a four-and-three-quarter-inch mesh, warning that it is going to be five-inch after that. I have capitulated twice. I do not like to do that but they came forward with reasons that basically I thought were relatively sensible and allowed them to do it.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

But after this year, after this fishing season, there is no more four-and-three-quarter. It is back to five-inch. You see, that is what happens when you make an exception to accommodate a situation, then it gets to be the norm, the standard. It is always a sensitive thing and I want to just raise that. It never seems to work out the way you think it will when you take and make the exemption, and this was done prior to my time. Then when you want to change it back to where it was, it is not that simple anymore.

The same thing happened I guess somewhere along the line. Long before my time and I think long before even this government came to power, a decision was made to allow the whitefish fleet to fill their quota with pickerel and sauger if they wanted to.

* (1720)

It has always been a very sensitive issue. It is still a sensitive issue out there. They were always known as the big ships or the big boats, the whitefish fleet, because they fished in the middle of the lake because they have the equipment and capacity to do that. But somewhere along the line a decision was made that they could also, instead of whitefish, fill their quota

with pickerel and saugers. I am led to understand that there were years when they filled their total quota with pickerel and sauger and not with whitefish.

That is a real dicy, sensitive issue out there. I could suggest to the member that if he ever wants to get into the middle of a big rhubarb and fight, visit an establishment where people have entertainment and relax from time to time and start talking about five-inch versus four-and-three-quarters, and talk about three-and-three-quarters and who is doing what out there. I mean, that would be the fastest way to have the entertainment of the night going on. Those are the sensitive issues that are out there. You can listen to every side of the story, and you get more confused the more you listen.

That is why I do not think the member has any solutions for me at this point. I am desperately trying to get some support in terms of getting a study done to get some information so that proper decisions can be made. I am not even sure whether we can necessarily, by the time we get around to having that information and make decisions, make everybody happy either, but I would like to think that ultimately when we have the information, we will make the decision based on what is good for the resource, the fish resource and for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Clif Evans: The minister indicated that the allowable filling of the quota for whitefish, the quota holders, has always been that they were allowed to fill their quota.

Mr. Driedger: Let that member not put the wrong information on. I said there was a decision made quite some time ago previously to allow that. It was not always there. It used to be a whitefish quota that they had. Then some time ago there was a decision made to allow them to fill it, a portion of it initially, with a percentage initially with pickerel and saugers. Then ultimately the limit was removed and they caught whatever they dang well wanted. That is a sensitive issue out there, because it was supposed to be when they were out with their nets fishing the whitefish, they caught a certain amount of pickerel and sauger, so they were allowed a percentage. I do not know all the details. They were allowed some of it. Then ultimately

a decision was made that they could catch it all in pickerel and sauger. And it has happened apparently, I am told. I do not know, but it has happened. No, it was not always there. There were definitely different rules at one time, and then the rules were changed.

Mr. Clif Evans: That is why I was asking, because the minister, if he looks back on Hansard he will read, I think, the way he said it was that is has always been. But no, and I can appreciate that. I am going to plead not knowing this for sure. I do not recall previous to '92 anybody making mention to me that that could actually be. Five thousand is something that I have always heard, and it was asked perhaps to be increased because of the very poor price of the whitefish. Our whitefish fishermen, some of them have had to sell off because of the price of whitefish. I have not heard that, and I appreciate the minister letting me know. I want to clarify those issues.

Mr. Driedger: I will get the date as to when that change took place. It was prior to 1992. I can assure him of that, because history itself dictates that it was a long time before that. Maybe the member did not get that information because this minister tells it all. It is a very sensitive issue. I am not prepared to skate around it. I am prepared to face it head-on somewhere down the line and try to see whether we can get it resolved.

(Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson in the chair)

Mr. Clif Evans: I just want to let the minister know that I have these concerns brought to me. The communities that are involved in my constituency really depend an awful lot on commercial fishing. Unfortunately, at times when I am asked to go out with some of the fishermen, for them to show me that in certain areas in the south basin there is nothing. They are pulling their nets with nothing. There is a concern. In the north basin in some areas there is decent fishing and the fishermen themselves are saying to me that we want to get some co-management together. We want to work together to sustain the fishing industry in Lake Winnipeg.

I get calls, I get stories. People talk to me all the time. I, too, would like a solution to this because it is too important. Specifically it is too important in the

areas that—I will tell the minister, last week I had six calls telling me that the skiff fishermen were leaving the south basin, the northern part of the south basin, leaving because there was nothing, no fish. So there has to be some sort of control, I agree, but there has to be some co-operation. We have to involve the fishermen with a solution.

Mr. Driedger: That is why I think I want to just assure the member that once we have established who will do the review and set out the terms of reference that a review will include consultation with fishermen. I can tell you, anyone who is going to undertake this project is going to get a variety of versions and stories thrown at them, because it is a very complex and difficult situation. If it was easy, somebody in this department would have already made that decision and made it happen. It is not that simple anymore.

That is why it comes back to the point that I was making earlier on that ultimately when we have the information, we will make decisions that we feel are going to be important to make sure that the resource stays healthy, because there is no sense in having a bunch of commercial fishermen flying around the lake with nets in the water and not pulling up any dang fish. We have to make sure that we have that resource that we try and protect it to some degree so that people who basically rely on that to make their living that the opportunity is there.

I do not want to end up with the reputation of being the minister responsible when they finally caught the last pickerel out of Lake Winnipeg. I am over-exaggerating, but you look at what happened to Lake Winnipegosis. That basically destroyed the whole commercial fishing concept out there, the way of life for very many people. We will try and see what we can do with the review, and if we can get the information together we will make some decisions. Like I say, it might not please everybody, but hopefully the decisions that are going to be made are going to be made in terms of sustaining the resource and good decisions for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Clif Evans: In closing, I thank the minister for allowing me to clarify these issues, not only for my benefit but for others who have asked. I think the

minister has to appreciate, and again I could be wrong. I was wrong back '68, I think, once before, but I would like to say that—and this is being biased—my area is so important to commercial fishing and not only the whitefish quotaholders, the skiff, the co-ops that are on my side of the constituency of the lake and, of course, for the other areas. I would like to see the industry continue to strive and I would like to see all types of commercial fishing do the best that they possibly can without any problems and without any further problems.

* (1730)

I just want to thank the minister for taking on to meet with the IRTC people, the Lake St. Martin. They called me today to let me know that they are meeting with you next week. Am I correct in that? I just want to thank the minister for taking the time to do that.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, today in the morning it was the intention to proceed with setting up a meeting with the Lake St. Martin fishermen group. We are having some complications that are developing, and we are not sure whether that meeting will take place or not. I will have a better idea in a day or so as to whether we continue with that issue, other complications that have developed dealing with other issues with the group. So, I do not want to leave it on the record that the meeting is definitely on, it probably could not be on.

I just wanted to add something for the member for Lakeside.

An Honourable Member: Interlake. I am a lot younger.

Mr. Driedger: Interlake. Yes, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is better looking, too.

I just wanted to make reference to the Icelandic River fish hatchery that we basically have set up there between the Gimli-Riverton commercial fishermen and the Gimli District game and fish association, where we have the fisheries enhancement initiative, put in \$25,000 for the fish hatchery and the fish enhancement thing, and basically 350,000 eggs were collected and fertilized and 200,000 fry stocked in the Icelandic

River. So these are the kinds of things that—but that in itself was only a drop in the bucket from my perspective. By and large we have to still protect our spawning rivers and we have to protect the taking of the resource in such a way that there is going to be sustainability in it.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, yes, I am well aware of the hatchery, of course. The minister is not going to try and get something by me that I was not aware of when it comes from my constituency. The minister knows since he became minister, and the previous minister, that I am fully supportive of fish hatcheries. There are other areas in my constituency that have been requesting fish hatcheries and a process to be put in place in their areas. I will be dealing with that on an individual basis with the minister as I have previously.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, I want to make sure I understand what the undertakings were of the minister earlier in our conversation regarding the different positions in each of the regions. For when we next meet, which will be tomorrow, I can look forward to some information on numbers of managers or technicians or engineers from each of the regions from 1989 and the total number for 1995 in each of the regions? Is that possible?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I just want to clarify. We are going to try to put together as much information as we can. I cannot assure the member, because we are sitting at ten o'clock tomorrow morning again, and most of the staff, basically, have taken off. That makes it very difficult to make a commitment that we will have it here by tomorrow morning.

I will give the undertaking that we will try and have that information maybe by the afternoon session or as soon as we can. I cannot expect, especially if we sit here until six o'clock, that these people go back there and spend the next four hours doing that. We will try. I will give the undertaking that we have the specifics that we have interpreted, and we will get the information back to him. Okay?

Mr. Struthers: I do not intend to make it a give-me-the-stuff-now kind of a request. I just wanted to make sure that I was clear on what information it was that I

was receiving. The other thing that I would like to ask about, in each of these regions are there forestry managers, forestry engineers, and forestry technicians?

Mr. Driedger: Most definitely, forestry people, forestry and wildlife people. I will try, Mr. Chairman, to sort of give a bit of an umbrella picture of what we have in each of the regions so that member has a bit of a comfort level as to how we cover that. I think we can do that, if he allows us a little bit of time to do that. We have a lot of employees, but I am going to see whether we can give him sort of a comfort level in terms of the umbrella organizations within each of the regions. It varies, depending on what we have in that region.

Mr. Struthers: I understand, then, that there are the same positions in Wildlife, in that department, as there are in Fisheries and as there were in water: the engineers, managers and technicians.

Mr. Driedger: I am going to try and save some time for the member and myself in terms of, rather than belabouring it, not belittling it, but if I maybe do a bit of a structure. We did the organizational chart in front; I will try to do something on that basis for the regions, so that he has a bit of a comfort level how this system works within there. Then we can maybe go back and see whether there is other information that he needs. If that is acceptable, then we can save some time, and just because we pass this does not mean that we cannot go back to it. The member knows I do not operate that way.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, thanks, and would you include Fisheries in that as well, for each of the regions?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I just want to say to member, that is why I say, I want to sort of try and give you a bit of an umbrella comfort as to how each of the regional districts is structured so that you have an understanding basically what is happening within them. Then, if he has more questions, we will deal with it from there.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I do have a couple of questions for the Minister of Natural Resources. This question I initially asked, I believe, was in the summer of 1994 on a call I received from the

Berens River fisherpersons. They did have some concerns about boundaries and things of that nature. I am wondering, as the minister indicated to me in the House, that he would undertake to have that meeting with the Berens River fisherpersons, if that meeting was ever undertaken, if it ever happened and what the result was of that meeting.

Mr. Driedger: No, I have not met with the Berens River—it is Berens River the member is referring to, right? I just went through extensively with the member for Interlake clarifying the difficulties and the requests I have from people all around Lake Winnipeg, various groups besides Berens River. There is Norway House, there is Grand Rapids, there is Dauphin River, Poplar River. Each one of these groups basically that has a designated area has been getting in touch and asking to have the area expand, to have the quotas expanded. On top of that, I made reference to the fact that we have the whitefish fishing fleet that basically is another component of the whole lake there.

I told the committee just a little while ago that instead of dealing with each individual group and community at this point in time in a knee-jerk reaction because of not knowing fully the implications of it, it is my intention within the next two weeks to tender for an independent consultant to take and do a total review of the whole Lake Winnipeg issue, including the whitefish fishery, the boundaries, the three-and-three-quarter-inch, the five-inch, the four-and-three-quarter-inch mesh. We need to get all the information together so that by this fall—I made a commitment that I will be making decisions in this department by fall. So it is not going to be a long undertaking.

* (1740)

We are going to do the tendering now. Within two weeks, we hope to have established and selected a group or individual that is going to do the study and gathering of information. They will go out.

It would be my expectation under the terms of reference that they will go and make contact with each of the groups, independent fishermen groups, et cetera, come back with recommendations, so that we can ultimately make decisions.

I made the statement before, and I will repeat. If the member wants to, maybe by tomorrow in the Hansard he can get a better comfort level of it, because I went into it quite extensively. Ultimately, when we have the information, we would make decisions that I think would be—possibly not everybody is going to like them, but I would hope that they would be made on the basis of sustaining the resource, protecting the resource so that those people who are dependent on making their living from commercial fishing or a good portion of their living from commercial fishing, then we can take and sustain that for the future.

So I am not trying to take away from the question that the member raised, but we just finished going through this. I can repeat detail if he wants, or he can wait until tomorrow. I am prepared to cover it later on after he has read it and has further questions on it. But I am trying not to meet with the individual groups at this point, because even the Lake St. Martin group wants to meet with me and deal with the commercial fishery, and that is on Lake Winnipeg as well. There are so many components to it, and there is always that suspicion that if I meet with one group and do not meet with them all, what commitments have I made? So I am hesitant to start meeting with them individually until I have more information, and then maybe we can see whether we can come to some logical conclusion with this.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I do look forward to reading the Hansard and coming to my own conclusions about what the minister is telling us in committee this afternoon. There are a couple of possibilities I would like to recommend, and that is to convene. Since the fishermen in the Lake Winnipeg are organized within their communities, I would recommend the minister consider perhaps convening a meeting of all those groups and perhaps talk about the different possibilities, the different limitations that he has as minister in charge of this particular department.

There are a couple of issues that are very pressing upon me to raise with the minister, and I believe we communicated it with a letter a very short while ago concerning Mr. John Guimond from the Sagkeeng First Nation. Now, he did not renew his commercial fishing licence for a number of years, and we had a problem

there with two John Guimonds. As it turned out both John Guimonds—one was John George Guimond, the other was John Baptiste Guimond—did not renew, I believe, dating back to the '60s or early '70s. Now what method is available, and being that the John B. Guimond that I wrote on behalf of considers fishing to be an aboriginal right, a treaty right and fully his right to exercise his rights based on Treaty No. 1 and sustain a living by utilizing the fishing industry. What are avenues that are open to him to obtain what basically is a treaty right, and that being in the form of a licence for him to embark upon commercial fishing?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that this is a pretty sensitive and tough issue. It has been out there for a long time, and, of course, the individual is entitled to the subsistence fishing that he needs for his own sustenance, but for a commercial licence, to continue to have a commercial licence, I am advised that the decision long ago was made that both licences were terminated at that time. I believe both of them. Whether we can turn around and renew it, the only thing that I would want to say to the member at this time is that I will get myself further updated on it without making a commitment that I can resolve it to his satisfaction or the gentleman involved with the licence.

I will have a look at it and, because of the history involved and the long period of time, of course, the value that is involved with quota at the present time. And I do not know what the history basically has been in terms of why the licences were not renewed, whether it was poor prices, were there no fish or other circumstances that had a bearing on it, and why whoever was the authority at that time made the decision not to renew either one of the commercial licences. Whether we can do a corrective measure after 30-some-odd years in that area, I do not know.

I would have to have a comfort level because, without getting into the details at this point, I want to tell the member that I assume that probably if there was a way to do a corrective measure here that we might have many, many claims come forward that felt there had been an unjust decision made somewhere along the line. By giving consideration—I am not saying that I am not—I am just saying that I want to look at it, but I

would hate to have to deal with about 50 different cases that said an injustice was done by somebody making a decision long prior to our time and now correct it. Because if you do it for one, you almost have to do it for others. I am not belittling that. I am going to have a look at that, and if I do not in committee, I will take and respond to the member for Rupertsland directly.

Mr. Robinson: I do look forward to that response from the minister. One thing that we should take into consideration that there is often a language barrier with aboriginal people, particularly people that utilize the fishing industry as a way of life, and many times there have been gaps in the communication between the various levels of government and aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people, for the most part, including myself, English is not a first language to myself so there are times in the past that there has been miscommunication with people and, particularly, on matters like this. So I do look forward to the minister's response to my inquiry.

Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if I may have leave to go back to one quick question on the northeast matter that, I understand, you just concluded.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Is there leave to revert back?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I have no problem with that.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: It is agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Robinson: This relates with the situation in the Island Lake communities. I believe that we are all aware of the four communities there—Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack and Garden Hill, of their intentions to opt out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

In the meantime, we are faced with a situation where the industry is not being utilized in that area. I think that we have talked about it in the House, and we have talked about it this committee prior, about what happens to the so-called rough fish that aboriginal

people and fishermen cannot find a market for. Of course I think that we all know the story of the Island Lake fishermen and the kind of markets that they would like and the potential they see and what they feel they could acquire by finding markets for not only rough fish but also the fish that is wanted the most at the current time.

With that in mind, I am wondering what dialogue the minister has had with the Island Lake fishermen with respect to the current state of affairs, with respect to this sort of impasse that we are experiencing with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation up in the air with particularly the Island Lake fishermen.

Mr. Driedger: I thank the member for raising that issue. I want to tell him that I had the occasion quite some time ago, a long time ago, basically when some of this activity started, to meet with some of the representatives from Island Lake who expressed to me the concern that they wanted to take and be exempted from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and whether I would be supportive of them and their request.

* (1750)

This was early last fall, I believe, when we started some of the conversations at the time I met with them. It was prior to the ministers' meeting that was held in Victoria with Minister Tobin, and I told him at that time that I would be taking the issue forward with the federal minister.

In the meantime, I think some representatives met with the federal minister raising the concerns with him as well. Subsequent to that I also spoke with the federal minister and said I had no objection that it could be supportable. That was in the initial stages. What happened since that time, the federal minister appointed a commission of some kind to do a review.

I felt a little sensitive, because the people that basically the federal minister appointed, there was not one from Manitoba. It was people from all other provinces except Manitoba who came out and made some recommendations. Basically the major recommendation was the abolishment of the Freshwater

Fish Corporation, which created all kinds of anxiety and concerns with many of the commercial fishermen who strongly believe that they need that marketing system in place.

Subsequent to that, I think various representations have been made to the federal minister, and in my latest conversation with him, because I believe he was prepared to make a statement in the House and make some decisions—and there was three points basically that my staff brought forward to me that we thought the decision was going to be made on and that I had conversations with Tobin on the issue, one, that the four communities that the member for Rupertsland mentioned were going to be exempted out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

One of the requests that meant to include another group around Pukatawagan, that federal minister apparently is not receptive to, but he was receptive to taking and exempting these four communities, and that was totally out of the question for the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, that they could set up their own marketing whether it was pickerel, jack, whitefish or rough fish, and they could run competition to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

Obviously the corporation has not done a very—I want to be careful—but they have not been able to provide the service for the people in those communities that they would have expected. It is my understanding that a plant has been built, or is in the process of being built, a fish processing plant, that they want to move on with this.

The second point that the federal minister was going to move on was the exemption of all rough fish for the rest of Manitoba from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation because for years there have been efforts made to see whether we could establish some kind of market.

The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has never established a rough fish market. There have always been all kinds of suggestions, talk, and people interested, saying: We can make a living from this; it is a good investment; we are throwing all these rough fish away. The member full well knows this story. So

my understanding was that the second point was that all rough fish would be exempted. They would be itemized as to ones that were on there.

The third point that the federal minister was going to address was the allowing of elected representatives on the board, designating certain areas, and they would be electing their own people.

Those are the three points, it was my understanding, that the federal minister was going to announce, and that this was going to be done on a three-year trial basis. My understanding is that the announcement has been made. I just want to tell the member that I had no difficulty in supporting the position basically that the communities and the groups asked me to support. Those were the three points. In fact, I did not even have a major concern whether Pukatawagan was going to be exempted or not, because this is another area where they have not been able to get the real benefits from the corporation.

These are the three that the federal minister's staff told my staff. I talked with him on the phone and concurred. One thing I did ask when I talked with him was to get a precise definition of the area that would be exempt around the Island Lake's four communities. I do not know whether to date we have a definitive description as to exactly what that includes, because some lakes basically were commercial fishing lakes at one time. There are some that are sport fishing lakes with lodges on them. I do not know exactly the definition of that, and I had asked him to forward that to me. We traded some calls. I do not know whether that has come forward to us at this time. I am still hoping to be able to have that to get a definitive idea as to exactly what area is exempted for the four communities.

Mr. Robinson: I did not want to take up as much time as I did from my colleague from Dauphin, but these are, indeed, concerns that are expressed to me regularly by the constituents that I serve as well. I think that this is a very important movement, in the Island Lake area particularly.

There are a number of elements that lead us to the situation we find ourselves in. First of all, the

elimination of the freight subsidy by the federal government, namely the Department of Indian Affairs, and, of course, the cuts on the freight subsidy by this government a couple of years ago with respect to subsidizing the costs of freight, therefore not making it viable to consider fishing as a way of making a livelihood in many northern communities.

I would just like to conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairperson, if the minister would be kind enough to keep us abreast of any further dialogue that may be occurring between the federal minister, his federal counterpart, and the fishermen in the Island Lake region on this issue that seems to be still in a slow way resolving itself.

Mr. Driedger: I just want to tell the member that if there has been any tardiness or lack of action, it certainly has not been because of my position or my department's position. I have given the indication very early on that I was supportive of their position with that and have been encouraging the federal minister to move as fast as he can. There was a fair amount of confusion out there and I know that the people from the poor communities by and large have been impatiently waiting, and I do not criticize. I feel they have a reason to sort of feel that things should have moved a little faster. Hopefully it still moves ahead. I do not know whether any fishing will take place this year but at least maybe the system can move ahead.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I believe that my remarks were on those matters that relate to this government for which the minister is responsible. There is no doubt in the future there are going to be issues that will arise from the Island Lake area. Not only that, Lake Winnipeg and all other areas of Manitoba, the province will be asked to take a certain position on or express a certain view on a certain matter. I believe that was where my remarks were geared towards, that the minister would kindly keep us updated. I think we would be very appreciative of that.

Mr. Driedger: Aside from the issues that I made reference to on Lake Winnipeg, you know, the problems that are facing us with the communities, it would be my intention once we have information to look for support and share this information before

decisions get made in terms of the impact it will have. It might not be positive for everybody. When in trouble I always like to have a lot of people around to hug, come with me. So I might be asking the member to be a part of that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 12, 2. Regional Operations (d) Central Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,118,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,536,100—pass.

2.(e) Eastern Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,099,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$852,000—pass.

2.(f) Western Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,236,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,440,200—pass.

2.(g) Fire Program (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,674,300.

Mr. Struthers: I am wondering, I have a whole raft of questions on the fire program, given what is happening around the province these days, and it is pretty close to six. Should we start with it?

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being six o'clock, the committee will recess until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Thursday).

JUSTICE

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

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 4.(2)(c) Provincial Policing.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I know that members on this committee had a late night last night.

I raised some questions yesterday, notwithstanding our collective rhetoric yesterday, I was wondering if the minister could report back today.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Just following up on the member's issue which he raised yesterday on behalf of a constituent. I have had, in fact, a little time to look over the file and the progress of this particular set of inquiries. I needed to make sure that there was no reason, or nothing outstanding which would cause me not to be able to meet with your constituent. I find that there is not, so if it would be helpful to you and to him, I am certainly prepared to make the offer today that I will have a meeting with your constituent and attempt to go over the issues with him and attempt to provide the answers to the best of my ability for the questions that he has raised.

* (1450)

Mr. Doer: I could not hear everything with the air conditioner with my age. I know that they have these things. I understand the minister has offered to meet with the constituent and I will facilitate it with her office immediately, rather than if you could have a direct meeting with him, I would really appreciate it. I think he would as well. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, no, it is not in the Justice budget line. It is in a line from Lotteries I believe.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Would the minister justify to the committee how she can say there was \$2 million for additional City of Winnipeg policing in the budget given that there is no identification whatsoever in any document that there is \$2 million for policing.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the \$2 million identified by this government to be given to the City of Winnipeg Police for a targeted grant is in the budget of the government of Manitoba this year, and it is contained in the line from Lotteries.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, is the minister saying that, in budgetary documents available to Manitobans, the \$2

million is earmarked for the City of Winnipeg Police Services?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, if the member would like to have further details regarding exactly how that \$2 million is listed in the budget document, I would refer him to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), but I have said it is not contained in the budget line of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Mackintosh: I want the minister to confirm with this committee that before the election there was indeed no public representation whatsoever that the government was going to be spending \$2 million on additional policing in the city of Winnipeg.

If I am wrong, I want the minister to correct me. Is she saying that there was a document produced by this government at the time of the budget indicating the \$2 million to go to Winnipeg Police Services? That is all. I am not trying to be cantankerous. I just want to know, and I would like the minister to advise me if there is a document or if she can produce a document that so indicates.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as I have answered in each question, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) is the one who is best able to answer how the \$2 million is allocated in the budget line and in the budget line through Lotteries. So his questions are best directed to that minister, but what I can assure him of is this government's commitment to provide the \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg Police to provide 40 more officers which will, we believe, assist in the whole public safety initiative for the people of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister has made statements that the \$2 million allocated for additional police officers for the City of Winnipeg is included in the budget. Would the minister advise where in the Estimates lines the amount is.

Mrs. Vodrey: It is contained in a budget line from Lotteries.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it anywhere in the Estimates of the Department of Justice?

Mrs. Vodrey: No it is not. I can assure him of this, this government's commitment to provide the \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg Police to provide 40 more officers, which will, we believe, assist in the whole public safety initiative for the people of the city of Winnipeg.

* (1500)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the minister cannot purport to say that there is a new allocation of monies for the City of Winnipeg Police Services, made in advance of the election, when there is no evidence to support that. The minister has said that this money was dedicated to this purpose before the election. I want to know, I want to see the evidence. Why is it not in the Minister of Justice's Estimates, if that, indeed, is the case? It is not in here. The minister had time to prepare this. The document was prepared following the budget and the Estimates compilation by the government. She cannot point to any line in her budget where there are additional policing monies for the City of Winnipeg.

Mrs. Vodrey: I have provided for the member an answer to every question he has asked regarding the provision of \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg Police Services for 40 more officers. The member seems to be seeking something. I really am finding it very difficult to understand what it is he wants to know. I have told him that the Minister of Finance is the minister to ask. The minister who is responsible for Lotteries, the Minister of Finance, will be able to explain to him exactly the process of this budget allocation.

The important part for the Department of Justice is that \$2 million has been allocated in the interest of public safety to provide 40 more police officers to the City of Winnipeg. That is exactly the process that we are undertaking now, and the member seems to be arguing. I do not really know what he is arguing about. However, if he has questions again regarding that line, I would direct him to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Mackintosh: If I have questions regarding policing in Manitoba, I will direct them to the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice has made statements in this House that the item, the amount of \$2 million for

the City of Winnipeg Police, was included in the budget, a budget which she said, of course, the opposition voted against, as if to say that somehow the opposition was opposed to additional monies for the City of Winnipeg Police Services when in fact no one knew about it.

I suggest to this committee that the \$2 million for the City of Winnipeg Police was taken out of the election slush fund. The minister wants to call it the Lotteries line, or whatever it is. The monies for policing have nothing to do with the Minister of Finance; they have to do with this minister.

I asked this minister: Where, in her departmental Estimates, is there an amount for City of Winnipeg policing in the amount of \$2 million?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, the member, I do not know—he does not seem to understand. The money is there. I would love to suggest this was my idea, but I must say—however, in consultation with colleagues, I suppose, the consideration raised by the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) is that, had he been aware himself of this, he would have voted for the budget. That would have been terrific.

That might have been exactly the stimulus that he needed, but what we know on this side of the House is that he voted against it. And the \$2 million, provided for the City of Winnipeg Police Services, is contained in this budget that he voted against.

Now, I am more than happy to answer questions relating to policing and am prepared to do that, and, you know, I have no problem as long as we sit here on this particular line of questioning, but as I said to the member, the money was promised by this government, it is in the process of being processed, and I simply can direct him to the Minister of Finance which I have done in answers to every question so far this afternoon.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the minister has reinforced in my mind, at least, that she has misled this Chamber—[interjection]—this is no point of order—that the minister has misled this committee and this Chamber—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would ask that you rule on the member attributing the motive and saying out, quite freely, the term "misled". It seems to me, Mr. Chair, that that is an unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns on the same point of order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, Mr. Chair, I ask that you admonish the minister for interrupting every time I—I should not exaggerate—but interrupt on a regular basis. I chose my words carefully. The word, I am sure you will find, is not unparliamentary. In fact, that word is essential for parliamentary democracy to function, free speech.

Mr. Chairperson: Order please. The honourable member for St. Johns did not have a point of order. He was only speaking to the honourable minister.

The honourable minister did not have a point of order on the issue because the word "misled" is not considered unparliamentary unless it is led by the word "deliberately".

The honourable member for St. Johns, to continue.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: As I was saying, Mr. Chair, I am coming to the firm opinion that this minister has misled this Chamber and the people of Manitoba by saying that the \$2 million for the City of Winnipeg Police Services was a part of an ongoing program or simply an announcement of decisions made before the election rather than an election promise, and I say that because the minister used that line of defence when we asked why she, or her department, had contacted and asked the chief of police of Winnipeg Police Services to attend a Progressive Conservative Party political election campaign promise announcement.

The minister has clearly failed to provide any evidence, whatsoever, that the \$2 million had been earmarked before the election and was part of the

government's plan for the fiscal year. I ask the minister if she would now advise the committee when the additional police officers will be finished their training and will be deployed.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would not want the member to have unanswered on the record what he has attempted to put forward. First of all, I am puzzled by the fact that he is trying to put something forward, I really do not know what it is, what point he is trying to make.

I can tell him, as I have told the House before, the \$2 million was allocated within the budget of the Province of Manitoba, the budget he voted against. That money has been available, earmarked for additional police officers for the City of Winnipeg Police. The amount of money is \$2 million. There is nothing about that, Mr. Chair, that should cause him to be concerned or worried or to feel somehow that something has happened that he did not know about.

This has been spoken about. I spoke about it. The Premier spoke about it. He characterized, however, the announcement of the dollar amount, in a very, very political way. It was made very clear at the time that this was an announcement of an expenditure of funds which was already contained in the budget. The people who attended on that day were people who were directly affected by the amount of money that is being set aside.

I really do not know where he is going with that, but I felt it was very important to at least put answers again, the same answers that I have given all afternoon, but answers again on the record.

The member asks when the officers will be finished their training. I am not able to provide him with the exact date. As the member knows, we have asked the City of Winnipeg to provide us with their plan, how exactly the dollars will be used, what their intake process and procedure will be. That is now being examined by the government of Manitoba. Two meetings have occurred with the City of Winnipeg on this matter and I hope that I will be able to provide him with those answers very shortly. I expect to be able to do that certainly within the next couple of weeks.

* (1510)

Mr. Mackintosh: An issue that I raised in Question Period really rests on the listed expected result of this appropriation number of this area of the department, which says, increased emphasis on community-based policing through proactive efforts.

Again, I ask the minister how she can justify that listed expected result with no effort whatsoever on her part to ensure that every cent of the \$2 million goes to community-based policing rather than traditional policing.

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that in terms of the expected results, I have met with the chief for the City of Winnipeg Police Services. I have explained the emphasis that we have as a government that officers should be available, officers should be visible to the public. We would really like those officers to work in two areas of high priority. I have explained those to the committee in the past couple of days. Those areas are auto theft and vandalism and youth crime. However, the availability of officers on the street, we believe, will assist in the area of community-based policing.

I have made sure that the chief was aware of what our government's interests are. However, as I have said to the member from the very beginning, with that in mind, the chief is still the person who will decide on the deployment of officers. We will be looking at the plan that has been sent by the chief, and I am confident that the deployment of officers will be done in a very thoughtful way and one which will really benefit the citizens of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Mackintosh: I guess I have to acknowledge that the Progressive Conservative Party's announcement in this regard was made, I think, some three days after the NDP released its platform, which included \$2 million for additional community-based policing. It was community-based policing, and it was our intention certainly to attach a condition to any monies going to police services in the province. I ask the minister why she did not see fit to offer to cost share and use the carrot of \$2 million to obtain not just 40 but more, and perhaps as many as 80 additional police officers.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the NDP's announcement did play catch-up with the plan of this government in terms of putting forward more police officers on the street. He seems to have trouble with that, but that is exactly what happened. Mr. Chair, the member also wants to have—he wanted in his plan to make sure that his party, his opposition party, would in fact direct the placement of officers on the street, but I have had a number of opportunities to speak with the chief of police. The chief has made it clear to me—and I have to say I think it is a very important point—that the deployment of officers is his decision, his responsibility, and when for some reason the deployment has shown itself to be not the correct deployment, it is his decision and his alone, and his responsibility alone which he says is his to accept. Somehow, if he tries to cast that in another direction, even if it is to the member of an opposition party, he feels that that is not appropriate.

So the member and his opposition party may decide that they would like to direct the chief of police to deploy officers in a certain way, but the chief of police has made it clear that that is the responsibility of the chief of police. Now, he very happily enters into discussion. He will, I believe, listen but, ultimately, when it comes down to the safety of the people of the city of Winnipeg it is the chief who really has to take that responsibility that he accepts.

The member then asked in Question Period as well, why did we not try and cost-share this? It is not the first time, again, that the opposition party has tried to step into another elected official's jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of the City of Winnipeg, in this case, or the Winnipeg Police Services and try and direct taxpayers' money. If the people of the city of Winnipeg saw their taxes increase they could look to the opposition party and they would say that the opposition party is responsible for the raising of the taxes of the people of the city of Winnipeg.

He would like to direct, as an opposition party, other jurisdictions of government continually. This government made the decision not to make our offer of police officers contingent on the decision of another level of government or to direct another level of government. We decided that we would simply come right up front, provide the grant, which would lead to

the 40 more police officers. We believed that was in the best interest of the people of the city of Winnipeg.

Now, the member might have wanted to hold that up. He might have wanted to hold it up till somehow he could come to some agreement with the City of Winnipeg or, given the fact that he would direct the City of Winnipeg to match the grant, wait to see if in fact they were able to match it, and we still would not have any more police officers on the street, not one.

I believe that the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and his opposition colleagues have gone the wrong way there. In this case, this government came up, we have made the decision to provide the money. It is not contingent on a matching from the City of Winnipeg. We have not attempted to direct another jurisdiction and we are confident that the chief of police will place the officers where they are most needed.

Mr. Mackintosh: All that diatribe was based on the silliest notion and it is hardly worth even rising to rebut it, but I feel I am called on. For the minister to somehow base her whole argument on the notion that we were going to direct the chief of police to do anything is such nonsense it hardly serves the people of this province.

Making monies available is hardly directing, and having conditions on monies available is hardly directing.

Further, to suggest that offering the monies on a cost-sharing basis is hardly directing the city to raise taxes, it is the city's prerogative whether to accept such an offer or not and do what it wishes and make priorities, which may not include raising taxes

Given that the amount is clearly not within the departmental spending Estimates for the Department of Justice, would the minister advise whether this \$2 million is to be a permanent feature of her budget?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, what I can confirm is that the grant is intended to be recurring. The placement of that grant, whether in next year's Estimates or budget it will appear in the Department of Justice or continue to

appear as it does now in money from Lotteries, I am not able to tell him that. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) may be the one who can answer how that grant will be laid out.

* (1520)

Mr. Mackintosh: Now the minister, after going on the phony assumption of what this side was saying about how the money should be used, has to now explain that, if she is so against directing the City of Winnipeg Police Services to do anything, why is it that throughout the campaign and in the literature the Progressive Conservative Party said that the funds will pay for officers to combat crimes, specifically motor vehicle thefts and youth crime?

Is it in fact a condition and a direction, or is it not? How does she expect that those particular crimes can be targeted? Are there certain officers that are going to walk down the street and turn their head when they see a break-and-enter and just look for the car theft? How can the minister justify that kind of announcement?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as I am reading the document, which I believe the member has in front of him and that is where he has been getting his information, it says that the additional officers will be on the street to focus on combatting crimes against people, property and youth violence.

That is a focus that we are interested in. That is a focus that has been communicated to the chief. However, from the very beginning, on the day of the announcement and every meeting from that time, we have made it clear that the chief is the one who will determine how to do this.

The member has a very sheltered view somehow of the fact that, if someone is doing only that one thing, then they cannot stop and do anything else. I do not know how he has ever had that experience with a police officer that a police officer will walk away from—[laughter] He is laughing now.

Mr. Chair, I believe the member has misunderstood again. Perhaps he has something more he would like to add, and then perhaps I can answer him.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chairperson, I wanted to return to the matter of the \$2 million and the 40 officers. The minister has told us several times that she has, or somebody has, allocated \$2 million and 40 officers for the City of Winnipeg.

In response to the member for St. Johns' question about the implementation of the community policing program, she said that she did not really know when these police officers would be ready to work.

I wonder if she could give some sort of general time line. I understand that she cannot be specific, but is it going to be the fall, next winter? When will it be, generally speaking?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I know from meetings with the chief that he wants to proceed as quickly as possible. It does take a period of recruitment, and it takes about one year for officers to be fully qualified and on the street.

Ms. McGifford: Does that mean that this policing program will not be in place for another year?

Mrs. Vodrey: The program is one which will require the training of officers and the costs through the training process also of recruitment. So there is a process that has to be satisfied while we are putting those officers on the street. So the program will go into place as quickly as possible, but the member asked how long till new police officers are actually on the street fully qualified.

I presume she means fully qualified. Fully qualified is about a year, but costs do not start just then when they go on the street fully qualified. In fact, the costs are there during the training process, recruitment process and so on.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry, I had understood from earlier information and perhaps I had misunderstood that the police officers or the future police officers had indeed already been recruited and that the training portion of the program had begun.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, perhaps some misunderstanding in that there is an ongoing process of

recruitment because there are always a number of officers who leave the force by way of attrition, retirements and so on. So the police service does have a process of ongoing recruitment.

What the 40 new officers will require is additional or stepped-up recruitment in order to meet the 40 new officers. So I am not sure if the member is asking can I today say which members within a recruitment class are members for the attrition group and members for the new group. I am not able to tell her that today.

Ms. McGifford: What I was asking was have these 40 officers, these specific officers, been recruited?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am trying to understand the question as the member has been putting it. Just let me try again.

There has been recruitment. There is ongoing recruitment. There is additional recruitment required for the 40 new officers. Though some officers have been recruited, and I understand there is a training class which has very recently started, I am not able to tell her today which within that class the chief would designate as those officers that he would see as the augmentation or the 40 officers that he might see as the officers being recruited as part of the normal process to fill in areas of attrition.

I do not have the information today. I certainly will be happy to give it to her when I receive it, because one part that we are interested in is we want to make sure that there are, in fact, 40 new officers, not just a loss of 40, and 40 new officers, but the complement remains the same. The complement will increase by 40 officers. I am not able to tell her today which within a recruitment group or class are those 40 officers a part of. The chief will have to inform me when that information is available.

* (1530)

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry that the minister has had such a struggle with my questioning. I am sorry, too, that she appears to be getting impatient with me. I am not trying to be frivolous. Part of my constituency happens to be Osborne Village. In Osborne Village

levels of vandalism and petty crime are very high. I have received phone calls from several businesses that are very concerned about their businesses, very concerned about what might happen this summer. They believe that as the weather grows hotter—and we wonder if it really can get much hotter.

Anyway, as we enter high summer, the business people in Osborne Village are extremely concerned about their futures as businesses, so I am trying to find out whether there will be additional police officers available to see us through the summer.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am sorry the member feels so sensitive about efforts to answer questions. Let me tell her again. I am prepared to spend a long time on this if that will be helpful to her. I have explained that there is a process of recruitment required for the 40 new officers. It takes approximately a year for those officers to be fully trained and fully qualified and be on the street.

If the member is asking if officers will suddenly appear on the street within less than 10 days from now or I guess today—it is the first day of summer—if we are looking at those officers being available for June and July, 40 more, my answer would be, I do not think so because it takes some time to fully train those officers. However, I have said to the member, I think this is the third time I have said it, when the chief is able to provide me with information as to exactly where those 40 officers are in the recruitment and the training process, I will be more than happy to share it. At this point I do not have that information from the chief.

I certainly understand, however, the concern she is raising on behalf of her constituents. That is why I have made the commitment that when I have that information I will be more than happy to share it. I cannot give to her what the chief has not yet provided to me.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to point out that while today may be June 21 and the first day of summer, the government has had seven years to provide proper protection for the businesses and people in Osborne Village. Those people do not feel that they are being properly looked after.

I would like to also comment on something that the honourable minister said in response to a question from my colleague from St. Johns. That is, I believe she said, have you ever seen a police officer ignore one crime because he or she was assigned specifically to only look after another kind of crime?

People in Osborne Village have told me that they have seen police officers deliberately drive by and ignore drug dealings because these officers are overworked and simply cannot cope with the situation in Osborne Village. So, indeed, apparently the kind of thing that the minister scoffed at is happening in Osborne Village.

Anyway, since this line of questioning seems to be going nowhere, I wanted to ask the minister some questions about recruitment which she may not be able to answer. I am interested in the kind of recruitment and if there will be special efforts made to recruit certain kinds of persons to target certain kinds of persons for certain work.

For example, Osborne Village, as I am sure most of you know, is inundated with young people each summer. It may be advisable to have an officer for example who has had considerable experience dealing with youth. I wonder if this kind of targeting relationship or targeting of officers has been part of the recruitment process—or if you do not know about the recruitment process.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the member says, in this House, some very serious allegations regarding the professional duty of police officers, information that she says she has. What I would advise her is that, if she does have that information, or someone known to her has information, then I think she should provide that to the chief of police of the Winnipeg Police Services.

It is a serious allegation, and she has said that she has said professional police officers have walked by certain kinds of criminal acts. My response to that is that I certainly hope she will take the action then that falls to her because she is in possession of information that could be very important to professional police work.

In the area of recruitment, as I said, the process we followed is that two meetings have been held with the chief, and included in one of those was a meeting with representatives of the City of Winnipeg. The government of Manitoba has asked for a plan from the City of Winnipeg. Certainly, in the discussions that I have had with the chief, I am very well aware that the chief works very closely with the community and, I believe, has a track record of having taken into account the needs of the community. I am confident that the recruitment will be a sensitive one.

However, if the member, in terms of our discussions, has issues that I could pass on in further discussions, I am happy to do that. I think that our discussions between the chief and myself are important to pass on the information and comments from citizens from the city of Winnipeg, and I will be more than pleased to do that.

I am not able to give her details of the recruitment. Perhaps, if we are still here in Estimates next week or the week after, we may be able to discuss that. I do not have it available today, but when I am able to—and this is the commitment I have undertaken from the very beginning of the line of questioning—I will be more than happy to share the information with her because this is good news. This is good news for the people of the city of Winnipeg that there will be more officers. It is good news, also, in the area of employment.

Ms. McGifford: I know that the chief of police for the City of Winnipeg has a very fine reputation. What was behind my question was the fact that the business people and other people in Osborne Village are very interested in a community police officer, which may or may not be a possibility. I am uncertain where we are at with that.

They believe it is extremely important to have an officer who can create a relationship with the youth in Osborne Village, an officer who has community development skills and community outreach skills because the people of Osborne Village, especially the businesses in Osborne Village, want to create a healthy relationship with the youth in the village.

* (1540)

Mr. Kowalski: Mr. Chairperson, it was not what I first rose to talk about, but I have to comment on the member for Osborne's (Ms. McGifford) suggestion that police officers would be negligent in their duties and drive by incidents of drug dealing or any other criminal offence because they were tired or overworked. Yes, they are human beings but every day, whether it is through the dispatch centre, individual officers have to decide on priorities.

If an officer is en route to a domestic dispute—and often officers do not know when they are dispatched to a domestic dispute how violent it is—would they be better off stopping on Osborne to deal with two young people selling a bag of grass or are they better off protecting a possible violent incident? Officers all the time have to make those judgement calls, dispatchers, inspectors. We send officers from the Winnipeg Police Services to the Canadian Police College to train them in police management to make those decisions.

There will always be concerns about priorities when someone sees a police officer, maybe for the first time in five days, pull up at a Robin's coffee shop to have his first coffee break, maybe his first meal break in five days and people will say, well, I was waiting three hours for someone to come to take my report of a break and enter to my home. So we have to be careful when putting this type of allegation on the record that it could be interpreted as besmirching the reputation of the members of the Winnipeg Police Services.

When I made my opening remarks in Estimates, I was challenged by the Justice minister to speak positively when I see the department and the minister do positive things. Although her memory may be short, I have in the past, but it may be a couple of small things that I want to bring forward.

First of all, when we started Justice Estimates I had not opened my mail yet, but after Estimates I went back and received a document, Undertakings from Committee of Supply, '94-95 Estimates Process, Manitoba Justice, along with a covering letter. My colleague the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) also commented on this document how impressed he was that we have been in a number of departments of Estimates, and the minister and probably some people

on her staff have done a wonderful job at replying to the undertakings for information from last year's Estimates. It could have been more timely rather than the day of these Estimates, but I will not denigrate the positive note by saying that.

Before I go on to the other parts, I also want to put on the record that I do not want to appear to be a whiner, but because of our limited resources I cannot be here as often as I would like. I do not think it is fair, when you are not here, to then walk in here and ask questions that may have already been asked. As I said before, I will be relying on Hansard. After this Estimates process any of the questions that I was not able to pose, I hope I could direct them by way of correspondence to the minister, and those questions would be considered questions from Estimates.

I have to applaud the additional police resources to the Winnipeg Police Services that have been undertaken by this government. Are 40 officers enough? There are never enough. I know right now the overtime in the Winnipeg Police Services is skyrocketing. Very seldom in certain divisions in the Winnipeg Police Services do officers work any less than a 16-hour day. I believe the overtime bill will be horrendous for this year. The 40 officers will be a welcome addition.

I think the reorganization of the Winnipeg Police Services so far has not lived up to some of the expectations that the officers had for facilitating more manpower—I should say, staffing on the streets of Winnipeg. There was great expectation that when reorganization went through in the Winnipeg Police Services there would be more street officers out on the street, but so far that has not happened.

Another important part about staffing in the Police Services is that the officers that are there out on the street stay out on the street. I could remember years ago where an officer could arrest someone for impaired driving, take him into the police station, by the time his partner had finished going through the breathalyzer procedure, the report had been written, the documents had all been completed, and the cruiser car could get back out on the street. Now, it is not unusual to see officers tied up for an entire shift from one arrest.

What may be just as important as the 40 additional officers is, are there ways that the Justice department could facilitate officers staying on the street? Recent changes in federal law which have allowed officers in charge of divisions to put conditions on promise to appear may facilitate the release of many subjects that otherwise would have been taken before hearing officers, but there still will be a great number taken before—well, no longer hearing officers—magistrates.

Could part of that \$2 million, if it is in the view of the Winnipeg Police Services or the committee that the minister has talked about working on this hearing officer process, be used for nonuniform or sworn-in police officers and possibly for civilian staff, for sheriff officers, for other resources that would keep police officers on the street where they do more good?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, to my understanding, the \$2 million is not available to be used for civilian employees or for employees other than police officers. It is targeted to be for police officers to be available and on the street.

The member asked what other efficiencies can be brought into effect to assist officers, not have them spend so much time perhaps travelling from place to place and so on. He is aware that we are moving from the St. Boniface courthouse to 408 York in terms of the hearing officers—the magistrates now.

In my opening remarks I also spoke about a video link which will be established between 408 York and the Public Safety Building in an effort to avoid a set of travel time which would then take police not only from their division and then down to the Public Safety Building. This will then avoid the movement over to 408 York under certain circumstances.

When we get to the Courts Division, I will be more than happy to elaborate on that. I do not have the exact date available at the moment.

Mr. Kowalski: This question might be better asked in Court Services also. If so, please direct me.

I understand that one of the problems with video bail hearings has been the legal acceptance of a signature at

the two different locations that has been signed at the same time and being the same signature. Has that matter been dealt with in facilitating this video link between 408 York and the Public Safety Building?

* (1550)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed that there has not been a problem with the bail video link. An issuance in connection with a search warrant, yes, there have been some questions, but the bail video link has not been a difficulty.

Mr. Kowalski: This may be dealt with better in Corrections, but I am also told that there are problems with the Remand Centre closing down for admissions at certain periods of time for lunch breaks, during shift changes and that, tying up police officers. I am sure that members of the public would prefer that police officers got back on the street if they could be turned over quickly and expediently to whether it be sheriff officers or staff at the Remand Centre. Right now, I understood that there are delays because of the Remand Centre being shut down during certain periods of times for admissions.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I would not want to leave that on the record without some answer. So I will say, at this point, I am not aware of that difficulty. However, it would be best examined again under Corrections, and if the member would like to raise it on the Corrections line when Corrections Division is here, I would be happy to talk about it then.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I have just a few questions, more so out of curiosity. I am trying to get a bit of an understanding, I guess more so of protocol, that sort of thing. The relationship between the chief of police, if you will, and the minister versus, let us say, the chief of police and City Hall, how is that worked through? If the minister could just somewhat elaborate on that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, between the chief of the Winnipeg Police Services and City Hall, City Hall is the employer, but between the chief of the Winnipeg Police Services and myself as minister, the chief is independent. The chief and the police in general often

work very closely—the reality is they work very closely with the Department of Justice, and guidance and advice are sought and given, but there is an independence.

Now with the RCMP, the relationship is different because we have a contract relationship with that policing service, so there is a difference in the relationship between the RCMP and the Minister of Justice and the relationship of the chief of the Winnipeg Police Services and the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Lamoureux: There are contract arrangements with the RCMP, and that thereby gives some sort of influence in terms of what things they would do if it is deemed that it is necessary or that employer-employee relationship is established.

With the Department of Urban Affairs, there are block grants that are given to the City of Winnipeg. Is there a certain percentage of that that would be designated to go towards the City of Winnipeg police force?

What I am curious in knowing is if the minister wants to be able to meet with the chief of police, no doubt there might be some moral obligation because she is the Minister of Justice, but could in fact the chief of police say, no, I am too busy today or the mayor has summoned me for two o'clock? She is the one that signs my cheque, that type of thing. I am just trying to get just a better understanding of just how that works actually.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, in terms of the RCMP, the relationship is, as I said, a contractual one, but they are still employees of the federal government. In that contractual relationship, it does allow me as Minister of Justice to provide direction in general terms and to provide a statement of priorities, objectives and goals to the RCMP. I do not have the same relationship with the City of Winnipeg Police Services.

I want to be careful not to speak about another department. Urban Affairs comes into Estimates after Justice, so I think they can answer probably better for how their funds are allocated. I believe I am correct in that they have a general block grant. They may also

have some targeted grants. I think policing comes from the general grants, but I have to say that I am not sure. So it really would be unfair of me to put that on the record and assume that I was correct. I really should leave that to the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer)

In terms of asking the chief of police, City of Winnipeg, to attend meetings, yes, I often extend invitations to him, have invited him to attend certain announcements which would be of interest, and he does not always attend. He is not always able to. Often he will send a designate or another representative of the Winnipeg Police Services.

I think back when we had the Street Peace announcement and a designate attended. I think of the No Need to Argue announcement, and the chief attended because there was a direct interest. The Winnipeg Police Services in No Need to Argue was directly supporting the program with their officers. In Street Peace, they were going to run the phone line from their youth unit. So, when the invitation was extended to include them, they decided to attend, the chief not always able to attend.

In terms of meeting in my office, it is, again, we will ask the chief to come or the chief can write me a letter and say he wants to have a meeting or the chief can phone and say it would be important for him to have a meeting. It is a two-way relationship there where the reality is that the police do need lawyers, particularly in the area of Charter issues, and so the true working relationship is generally a fairly close one.

But there is not with the City of Winnipeg police the same contractual arrangement as there is with the RCMP. The City of Winnipeg police are employees of the City of Winnipeg.

* (1600)

Mr. Lamoureux: One of the reasons why I asked that is government comes up with what I believe is a good idea in terms of trying to get more community police officers into the different communities, and with City Hall every year it seems that they go through a budgetary process in which we are going to have to lay

off Fire Department employees, police employees and so forth.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

It just seems that, when I heard about the announcement of the 40 new police officers, what would prevent the City of Winnipeg saying, well, gee, now that we have got an additional commitment of 40 new police officers from the province, we can actually cut back on recruiting? Is there some sort of the check that is put into place to prevent that sort of thing happening?

What I see, and I know the minister and the New Democratic critic got into an exchange in terms of an idea, and whoever's idea it was actually, it was a good idea. I would not want to see this good idea being watered down if the City of Winnipeg ultimately decides, well, we can save money here now, roughly about \$2 million, because the province is kicking in \$2 million.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, yes, that is a good point and there is certainly a check that we put on that. We have asked for the complement of the City of Winnipeg police to be increased by 40 so that the complement which they are currently at simply cannot be reduced by the City of Winnipeg and then we would fill in that 40. We have asked, in fact, for the complement now to reflect the additional 40 officers. In my meetings with the chief around this issue, I have said that we will be looking for the full complement and 40 to make sure that this effort and these extra dollars are not a way for the city to find their way out of certain obligations. This is an additional grant which is given to the City of Winnipeg, and it has increased the complement. The chief has agreed and understood, as has, I understand, his employer.

Mr. Lamoureux: Has the minister ever given any consideration about, or some form of an invitation—I do not even know if it is something that is possible or feasible, and that is why maybe she has and then she has ruled it out, I do not know—with respect to inviting the chief of police to be able to participate in some capacity, obviously not at these Estimates but in future

Estimates? Does she see that there is any real role for something of that nature, or would it be too precedent setting that it would not be worthwhile in getting involved in?

I would think that there might be some benefits; for example, crime, as all parties know, is a major issue. People want to talk about it. I know I could probably ask endless questions in any given day regarding the issue of crime. Is this something in which it is at all feasible, or is just not ever going to happen really? [interjection] You would not see it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand the reason the member is asking in that I am sure there are some very interesting questions that would be interesting to talk about with the chief. It is really my view that it would not be appropriate to bring the chief into the Legislature to the Estimates of the budget of this government. Each elected level has their own mechanism for dealing with the accountability and the issues. Having said that, Estimates is probably not the place to bring the chief in.

However, as I said to the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), where there are issues or concerns or questions which members want to put forward, I am more than happy to raise them for discussion with the chief because we are elected members here, and there are issues which I am sure he would want to know about too when they are raised. I know he makes an effort to do that. That would be one way that we might be able to get his input, is to have questions raised. I am more than happy to bring the information back.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I know that I would find it extremely informative to listen to some sort of a discussion on the whole concept of community policing. When we talk about community policing, are we talking about the smaller, the broader-size communities?

I recall, I do not know, I guess it would be about two years ago, where they were—I do not recall the report, but there were stories making reference to the super regional police offices. I believe one was possibly being hinted somewhere around Logan or McPhillips, for example. Then there is the more traditional type of

community police office, whether it is the one in The Maples or the one that used to be on Selkirk and in other areas of the city. Ultimately what I would argue for would be the more smaller communities, but even that would be open to some form of discussion.

For example, I serve an area—we all serve areas of 7,500 homes. Within my 7,500 homes, if you will, approximately 7,500, there are a couple of industrial parks and so forth. Does it make sense, is it feasible, to have two or three community offices based in an area of that size, or are we talking about having community-based policing one office in every 14,000, or are we looking at what type of demographics to determine the number of community police offices?

I guess those sorts of discussions—because we have entered at least in part into that fray when we say, look, we want you to top off; we would like to see 40 more police officers. If I just look at the number of 40 additional community police officers, we do not know if that is two in one office, meaning 20 offices, we do not know if that is one constable going in one office into the communities. I could ultimately argue, look, it would be wonderful to have one in Meadows West, in Garden Grove, Andrew Mynarski or the Mynarski area, the Shaughnessy Park area, Tyndall Park area, all of which make up the riding which I represent.

I do not necessarily have the type of information that might be beneficial in making or advocating what would be the ideal size. Suffice it to say, I do believe an area that comprises of 7,500 homes, if you like, could quite easily justify having some form of a community police office and would advocate that. At least in part, this is what I believe the minister—because we do currently have community police offices, and there is a fairly substantial commitment to community policing from this government.

My attempt is to try to get a bit better of an understanding in terms of where the government believes community police offices and the number of community police offices—and when I say a number, I am not looking for the minister to say, geez, I want 30 new community police offices. I believe—or the government says, well, look, here is a community; maybe it is comprised of this in terms of its

components, and that is where we believe a community police office should be going type thing, to try to give that more direction.

* (1610)

Then I am better able to talk to individuals, whether it is Mike O'Shaughnessy, John Prystanski, Amaro Silva or Harry Lazarenko—I believe I have covered the north-end, inner-city councillors—in terms of saying, hey, here is what the province feels the general direction that we should be taking is; here are the arguments that are being presented and justified. Then I can hear what their counterarguments are.

I do believe very firmly in community police offices. I would sincerely like to be able to facilitate a community office in my area. I have seen many of the benefits of the community office being located in The Maples. Whomever gets the credit for establishing it there, I applaud their efforts.

I do believe that the provincial government and this minister can play a leading role in ensuring that there is a community-based policing throughout, in particular, the city of Winnipeg. If she is successful in getting this across, she will assume the credit for it. I think there are a lot of individuals that would like to be able to participate in the idea. I would indicate that I am one of those individuals that would like very much so to be involved in this issue because, much like health care and education, I believe crime is a very high area of interest within my area. I know that the constituents that I represent would like to see me more involved in getting something into the community.

I hear the government is serious about trying to bring community police offices and anything that is possible in terms of expediting or assisting the minister because, as the minister herself makes reference, she is not necessarily the employer. There are members of council, no doubt, in whom she would get along quite well and being very successful in expressing her opinions. There might be some councillors whom I might be able to have some influence with and likewise within the New Democratic caucus. If we do carry through on this good idea—because all political parties have acknowledged the benefits of this—I think that the

minister will be successful in implementing what was a campaign promise. I think that would be most beneficial for all the citizens that we serve.

So I appreciate her concerns with respect to having the chief of the police come before the Estimates, but maybe there is something that is more informal in nature in which we can gain additional information, especially if the minister is receiving opposition. If the minister is receiving opposition to the implementation of community-based policing, I am definitely interested in knowing that and what opposition she is receiving so I can then carry my arguments and articulate on what my constituents feel are very important to those people that are creating the opposition. Until valid arguments are given to me that are contrary to my beliefs of the importance of the community-based policing, I will advocate very strongly that the police department and City Hall—and maybe in Urban Affairs, if I get the opportunity, I will ask that question—we use whatever mechanisms we can to get the police back into the community.

Mrs. Vodrey: The member has provided some very interesting ideas to think about and has certainly expressed his view and support for a type of policing that, he is right, seems to not have 100 percent acceptance in all quarters. I appreciate hearing his view and his support on that.

I have some caution, however, that we cannot reach into city council and try to control and direct them. That is a point that I have been making over the course of the afternoon. There may be ways in which he has relationships with councillors that he can make his individual point of view known to them on behalf of his community, as a member of the community, which I think is very helpful, but I think we as a province would not have the ability to attempt to control those councillors at the city level.

He has spoken a lot about community policing. I think he knows this, that the ideas of community policing vary. They vary depending upon which police service we are talking about, what the geographical area is, where in fact it is being put into place. It has to be responsive to the community. What community policing looks like in one area and what it means to one

individual may have really an entirely different meaning to another individual.

But I am told and remember that the commissioner of the RCMP in an annual report wrote about some ideas about community policing, and since the member is interested, I will be happy to forward him that report. Those ideas and comments by the commissioner of the RCMP, really the most senior police officer that I deal with, you know, federally, the commissioner, I think it might offer some additional information and some interesting points of view that he may find, in his general discussions, would be helpful. I will undertake to send him a copy of that annual report. Hopefully, he will find it interesting.

Also, there have been, over the years, some grants to Citizens for Crime Awareness in Winnipeg. Those grants, which have taken place over a number of years I gather, periodically, have been given for expansion into all policing districts. It is a broad-based community organization that administers programs such as Neighbourhood Watch from the City of Winnipeg police. I know the member is aware of it, and other members of his caucus are aware of that, and so I just mention it as another opportunity for the community to become involved and perhaps have some influence.

* (1620)

Mr. Mackintosh: I have been listening to the remarks of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I commend him for his embracing the concept of community-based policing, particularly for Winnipeg. In my constituency, for example, we suffer from a relatively high crime rate. Yet, we do not have community-based policing in the immediate area and we rely on community-based offices some distance from our neighbourhoods.

I took particular interest in the concept of community-based policing and then circulated a petition in the area, which was heartily endorsed, and that petition was presented to the City of Winnipeg and to the chief of police. I hope that will go into the decision making of the Winnipeg Police Services as it moves towards community-based policing.

I want to caution the member for Inkster that when he is remarking on the position of this government, despite the objectives that are listed in the Supplementary Estimates to the effect that the department is dedicated to increased emphasis on community-based policing through proactive efforts and, as well, has as an Expected Result to enhance community-based policing programs, we have yet to identify an initiative by the government which promotes community-based as opposed to traditional policing.

The member for Inkster said that well, if there was any opposition to the minister's work on community-based policing, we would be pleased to help. There was no promise by this minister for community-based policing. There was no conditional grant given to the City of Winnipeg requiring that before the money be accepted, there be community-based officers rather than traditional officers. So I want to raise that with the member for Inkster.

Our concern has been the lack of dedication by this government and this minister in particular, through whether financial incentives or otherwise, to ensure community-based policing throughout the province.

I also have a concern that the monies being advanced to the city of Winnipeg may, and I am hopeful, be used at least in part for community-based policing initiatives because I know the City of Winnipeg and chief of police right now are in the process of developing a community-based policing plan for the city. That, I think, is largely due to the efforts of the particular chief of police in the city, by the way, a chief of police that I have the highest regard for, who has done wonderful things for the city in very difficult times. It is not enough to simply rely on the intentions or the plans of a particular chief of police at one moment in time.

The chief of police has indicated that he will not be in that office for very much longer, and I am concerned that the monies that are going to the City of Winnipeg not be used for traditional policing whatsoever, so I leave those comments on the record.

I hope the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will review those comments.

Mrs. Vodrey: One difficulty, I think, the member for St. Johns has is in understanding that I am the Minister of Justice for the Province of Manitoba, and the initiatives which he sees identified within my Estimates deal with initiatives across this province. The member has really confined his comments only to the City of Winnipeg and has somehow used that as his measure, so I would like to just take a few moments, Mr. Chair, to remind him that as the provincial Minister of Justice, I have initiatives across this province.

I know he comes from the city, so it may be easy for him or for his party to not be so aware of what is happening in other parts of Manitoba. I can tell him that in communities policed by the RCMP, there are in excess of 100 community consultative groups; those include groups of many different people, seniors, youth, aboriginal groups, visible minorities. These community consultative groups have the opportunity to talk about the kind of policing that they would like, what kind of participation they would like, and I know we talked about these in Estimates last year as well.

I can tell the member that Justice officials have attended meetings with community officials during the year to help them regarding their decisions of the kinds of policing service that they desire, by way of example, Lynn Lake. Justice officials went to this community to assist the community in resolving their policing concerns and also to Ste. Anne, where we also made the same effort to assist the officials in resolving police concerns.

Now the member very frequently speaks about our aboriginal policies as well. So I would like to remind him that policies relating to community-based policing, a police service in which the community has had an influence in determining the type of police service that they want extends also to our aboriginal communities. Now this has been absent in his remarks so far, so I am glad to put it on the table now and to talk with him just a little bit about our approach to aboriginal policing. Mr. Chair, we are going to—

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we completed ministerial opening statements a long time

ago. The minister is off on her own. She is talking about rural and northern and aboriginal policing, which are items that I intend to get to, but for her just to go off and go on through the Estimates like she is wandering down a path, I do not think is the appropriate way to go through the Estimates. We like to go topic by topic, and it usually is in answer to questions posed by the opposition.

So I would ask the Chair if he would ask the minister how long she intends to go on this, or is she prepared to answer questions from the opposition instead?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The rules and procedures of the Chamber indicate that speeches in Committee of the Whole must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion. I believe the honourable Minister of Justice was responsive to a question from the honourable member for St. Johns with regard to what initiatives were being introduced by the government on community justice, community policing, and I believe that all members are aware of the issue. I do not believe there is any point of order here, and I would invite the Madam Minister of Justice to continue.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the member has made a point about wanting to know about community involvement in policing and community-based policing. His discussion has focused only on the city of Winnipeg, and then he made the broad statement that there are no initiatives by this government. So my answer is to respond to him to remind him that my initiatives deal with not only the city of Winnipeg, where I believe we are working very hard with the City of Winnipeg with additional police officers, but, in addition to that, I have responsibility for the province.

So I have been discussing with him what is happening in rural and northern Manitoba. I know he has members from in and around that area. I thought it would be helpful to him because he has expressed interest in aboriginal issues and because aboriginal policing has been a major initiative of this government to move into the First Nations policing policy and because the movement of the First Nations policing

policy requires community consultation. That is the first step. So that is why it is extremely relevant, when he speaks about community involvement, that we in fact do remind him about our efforts in the area of aboriginal policing. Where I left off, Mr. Chair, was to say that we are going to 62 aboriginal communities across this province in order to develop with those communities a policing service that is responsive to each community's needs.

In my earlier comments to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I was saying to him that community-based policing, community policing, is going to look different depending upon what community you live in. It is not just like a cookie-cutter approach where it will look the same everywhere. It looks different because the communities had the opportunity to determine what their police service should look like.

That is why I think it is important to talk about the fact that we also have extended this whole issue of community policing and community influence in policing into the aboriginal community, as well.

I hope that answers his question regarding initiatives across this province.

* (1630)

Mr. Mackintosh: The government has dedicated additional monies for the City of Winnipeg police and, as well, for the RCMP. I am wondering if there have been any discussions with or requests from the municipal police forces in Manitoba as to their needs and whether they have resource difficulties, as well.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, though we have not at the moment had any specific approaches from other municipal police services, I can tell him that during the course of the election, there was a commitment to do an annual review of police staffing in rural Manitoba and to review the staffing levels on an annual basis with the RCMP, the City of Brandon and rural municipalities with separate police forces.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do know that the City of Brandon has some concerns about the staffing levels in that police department. I know Chief Scott has passed onto

me concerns about the need for more community-based policing in that community, but that was contingent on some financial assistance, so I urge the minister to outreach with the other municipal forces to ensure that the needs of those communities are being met.

I wonder if the minister would explain to the committee the communication centre grant, I believe it was, that was announced a number of months ago for the RCMP and if she could just explain what difference in service results from the funding.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the commitment that this government made to the RCMP was a commitment for the telecommunications side, a commitment of \$3.5 million. That \$3.5 million will be provided over a three-year period for the development of the new telecommunications centre.

With the commitment of the provincial government, the RCMP is now able to go to the federal government, and the federal government, with the confirmation of the provincial government, will be approving, we hope and believe, their portion very quickly and very soon, but it was important that the province make a commitment also.

The improvements will be a 24-hour response to calls from a single dispatch centre. Also, I think the biggest area is that this was seen to be a very important initiative by the RCMP, particularly for the health and safety of officers. They have qualified it or have put it together under that category of issues that they wanted to have addressed by the province. We accepted that and understood it, and so we believe that it will provide a benefit for the RCMP officers.

Mr. Mackintosh: So I take it then that the increase in the Provincial Policing line of approximately \$1.5 million is dedicated to the telecommunications centre. Does it include, as well, some dedication to additional officers?

* (1640)

Mrs. Vodrey: The amount of money is accounted for by the increase in 16 positions this year, that is \$887,600. Also, \$287,300, an increase for contractual

commitments under the 20-year policing agreement and the contractual increases for Manitoba's share of recruitment costs, pension cost increases, unemployment insurance cost increases, increased usage of guards and matrons and increased accommodation costs. The \$147,000 increase is for the replacement of 38 calibre revolvers and a provision was made for the replacement of 38 calibre revolvers, and it is to be phased in over a three-year period.

What is not reflected here is the dollars flowing to the telecommunications centre because it is not expected that the dollars will flow in this fiscal year, though the commitment has been made and the dollars will flow over the three-year period.

Mr. Mackintosh: When you look at the allocations here, we note \$50.4 million for provincial policing, which would be RCMP, I take it. Does that include municipal policing as well on that budget line?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, it does not.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if the minister could identify what line municipal police funding is on.

Mrs. Vodrey: I think if I have understood the member's question accurately, he is asking where would the budget for the policing of municipal police services be reflected in my budget.

It would not be reflected there. It would be reflected in the budget of the municipalities which are the employers. There are municipalities that have agreements directly with the federal government, as well, and those would be reflected in their budgets. Hopefully, I have answered the member's question for that one.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, this is instructive for me. So the minister is saying that there is no direct funding of municipal policing by the provincial government.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, to my knowledge and understanding, the municipal police services the member is speaking about are funded through the municipal tax share grant which flows from Rural Development.

Mr. Mackintosh: When you look at the budget for provincial policing overall, there is roughly a fifty-to-one ratio of RCMP to First Nations policing funding, which I think highlights the need for greater support for aboriginal community policing in Manitoba.

I am wondering if the minister can advise, first of all, what kind of agreement is now in place between the government and DOTC for policing services in those DOTC communities.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to correct the first part of the member's comments and then ask him if he would repeat the question about the DOPS.

He has alluded to what appears to be in the budget line a fifty-to-one ratio of funding RCMP to First Nations, and what I just want to tell him is included in Provincial Policing, that RCMP line, there is policing of aboriginal communities, so that all policing of aboriginal communities is not contained in that \$1-million line.

However, as I have been commenting on in earlier answers, we are visiting 62 aboriginal communities in an effort to change that, to change that indirect to a much more direct policing, but that requires us to follow the terms of the First Nations policing policy through consultation, the development of the kinds of police service that that particular community wants. So we are moving in that direction, but the numbers, I think, cannot be used to say 50 million RCMP and only one million or 1.5 First Nations.

He had a specific question about the DOPS, and I am sorry, I was not able to hear it.

* (1650)

Mr. Mackintosh: The ratio was not to compare aboriginal to nonaboriginal policing. I was comparing RCMP policing to aboriginal or First Nations policing. In other words, RCMP is at 50 and First Nations is at one. I recognize that the RCMP is policing aboriginal communities.

Regarding the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council and the police service there, my question was, what

agreement is now in place between the government of Manitoba and the DOTC for policing services?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we have at the moment a long-term agreement. It is a five-year agreement for policing the six DOTC communities under the First Nations policing policy.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister talks about consultations taking place with 62 First Nations communities. Is the government going to each community individually, or are negotiations taking place under the umbrella of the AMC?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chairman, we are going to each community. The process involves going to each community, some of them a number of times.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I am wondering what the government is bringing with it as it goes to those communities? What is the formula for funding, for example, that the government is proposing to each community? Is it consistent by community?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, under the terms of the First Nations policing policy, the funding formula is set. The funding formula is 52 percent payable by the federal government; 48 percent payable by the provincial government.

Mr. Mackintosh: So I take it then that the consultations and negotiations are all within the framework of that First Nations policing arrangement that the Solicitor General of Canada is a signatory to?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, yes, they are being negotiated under the framework agreement set out, and the Solicitor General of Canada is a signatory to the agreement.

However, I am told that where communities want to make additions, or want to provide resources for some special accommodations, that is certainly looked at, but it is the framework of the First Nations policing policy that is looked at all across the province.

Mr. Mackintosh: How many First Nations communities currently now have their own policing

service other than the DOTC communities? Perhaps if the minister could list those.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the DOTC communities are the only ones that have their police force, the DOPS police force. There is not another aboriginal stand-alone police force across the province.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister envision separate police forces in each aboriginal community if that is what the communities wish, or is the government suggesting, because I accept that the First Nations will have to make that decision, but suggesting that they band together and have, for example, regional or tribal council police forces?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the process that we have been following is not to impose any particular model on any of the communities. Some of the communities have chosen to meet as tribal councils, others as individual bands. We have been open in our discussion to the communities looking at what their particular needs are and how they would like to accomplish them.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee if there are any aboriginal or First Nations communities which have start-up dates in place now for self-policing or community policing?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I cannot provide the member with a start-up date for the further police agreements. I just can tell him that there are a number of communities who have completed the consultation process and are in the negotiation process now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the government reached out and advised all of the First Nations communities of this opportunity? In other words, is it being proactive in ensuring that the band councils or the tribal councils are aware of the government's position within the framework agreement?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are certainly satisfied that all the communities know. I can tell you, in terms of being proactive, I got off the plane in February, 1994 on I think it was a Friday morning, it could have been a Thursday. By Sunday evening we had our representatives in the air flying to the communities

across this province to start the process of consultation and negotiations.

We moved very quickly when we received the commitment from the federal government that they were wanting to proceed under this particular framework, and I indicated on behalf of our province that we were wanting to proceed under this framework. As soon as I got that assurance, which was given to me on a trip to Ottawa, we came home and we were immediately started in the process.

* (1700)

I think the member understands how it has to go. There has to be a process, first of all, with community consultations. Some communities have taken longer than others. Some have wanted to have a longer process. They have wanted to speak about whether or not they want a stand-alone police service. Some communities may not want the stand-alone police service. They may want the RCMP to continue or their projections may be that they want the RCMP to continue for a certain number of years, and then eventually phase in their own police officers.

Others can decide on a mixed kind of a police service, so we have tried very hard to look with communities at what they want now but understand too there are projections down the road. Here is where they are now, and they may wish to develop into another kind of police service, and we have to make sure everyone knows exactly where they are going in the process.

Mr. Mackintosh: I find it amusing for the minister now to be making it appear that it was the federal government that was responsible for the late signing on of Manitoba to the framework agreement when I think Manitoba was either the second last or the last province to sign on.

My next question follows from one of the recommendations in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report which expressed concerns about a lack of or a need for supports for the DOTC in particular with regard to training. I am wondering if the government is making any commitment to the First Nations

communities to assist in training constables and assist in the setting up of the administration of policing.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I think it is important to say first of all there was a requirement on behalf of this government to see that the federal government did intend to move ahead with the First Nations policing policy. At that time the new federal government had been in office, I believe it was under six months if it was mid-February and they were elected at the end of October.

We needed to have an indication, a direct indication from them and from the Solicitor General now of the federal government that he intended to proceed, and he intended to proceed under these funding arrangements or were they to be changed under these kinds of requirements or were they to be changed. Manitoba decided that it was important that I as minister go and meet with that federal minister and get those assurances so that Manitoba and the people of Manitoba understood what it was that we were agreeing to. I made the announcement as soon as I returned home.

I also would like to clarify—I believe the member has left on the record somehow Manitoba was the last one to sign on here. In fact, that is just not true, but I am assuming he was uninformed there.

He asked about the training and how training is delivered. Training is delivered in several ways. First of all, there is actual on-site training where officers—and this is what is happening in the DOPS by the way—actually work directly with RCMP officers. Part of the training is just in the form of actual work within the community and being able to work alongside of a trained officer. There is also training which occurs through D Division Headquarters, and then there is also the opportunity for members to attend at Depot in Regina.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am not sure if I missed it, but is there any financial commitment that is specified to the First Nations communities to assist in the training?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the amount of dollars that has been allocated for training, refreshing and upgrading was \$4,000 in the interim agreement,

\$24,000 for a full year. Now, of that amount, which is through the agreement, the province is responsible for 48 percent, the federal government is responsible for 52 percent.

Mr. Mackintosh: An issue that we canvassed in the last go-round in Estimates based on another AJI recommendation was the establishment of a special investigations unit when there are serious complaints alleged against a police department. This recommendation was proposed to ensure that police departments do not investigate themselves for such serious allegations.

The lack of the government moving on this initiative was denounced by the judge in the LERA hearing emanating from Brandon this last year. I know the minister reported last Estimates go-around that she was expecting a report by the end of last summer from within her department. I am wondering what the status of that issue is now.

* (1710)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as the member knows, at the moment what we have available to us is LERA. I wonder if the member could just clarify how he understood or what he understood about a report last year, if he could give me a little bit more detail of his understanding of what that report was and covered.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I hope there is such a report. It was on page 2836 June 1, 1994, where the minister said that at the moment, the deputy minister has instructed the ADM of Prosecutions to look at how we might manage this in the future. He has asked for a full report and in that report, it would include the role of the investigators, who provides the advice to the investigators, the discharge of the prosecution, the assessment of appeals. When this report is received, it could lead to a special unit, or it could lead to prosecutors from other provinces or from other parts of our province. So at the moment, we are actively looking at the issue, and I expect that I will be able to see that report by the end of the summer.

Mrs. Vodrey: I thank the member for clarifying, because to our understanding, what that report was

talking about did not have anything to do with the policing but rather how best to lay criminal charges against police when there were police involved in an incident. It did not have to do with the discipline process.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, well, I am sorry, I was not clear on that. The special investigations unit recommendation was to ensure that any serious allegation on the part of the police be investigated by some body other than the police organization which is the subject of the complaint, the investigation of which may or may not lead to criminal charges.

So I am wondering what the status of the internal report is and if we can expect a special investigations unit regime, if you call it that, to be established in the province.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that the deputy attorney general tells me he has not yet received a full report. He has received some elements of a report. It is not considered complete. The issues have, however, in the preliminary report, been a reporting of discussions. There have been discussions with chiefs of police, with counterparts across the country. It is a complex matter, a sensitive matter, one that we really have to think carefully about and our thinking is not fully complete at this time.

However, until we have completed our thinking and until we believe that we have a plan which may add to the system that we have now, we have urged police, who have their own members under investigation, to have another police service do that investigation, and that is generally the practice to my knowledge.

Mr. Mackintosh: The last couple of weeks we heard concerns expressed by representatives of police departments that some individuals were using the 911 number for nonemergency matters. I am wondering if the minister has considered this complaint and considered whether some public information program is warranted?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we have not yet done any specific thinking about it, partly because it involves a number of ministries. It is operated by civilians. The

minister of telecommunications is involved, and obviously the Department of Justice would be aware then when police are responding.

The member raises a good point about an information campaign perhaps, or a way to make sure that people understand the importance of using 911 for genuine emergencies. I have, I guess, read the same articles that he has, as well, and had some of the same concerns. It seems, if that reporting is accurate, that people have used the 911 for other than emergency reasons, so I thank him for the, and I am certainly prepared to look at it and think about it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Shall the item pass? The item under consideration is item 2.(c) Provincial Policing \$52,299,200. The item is passed accordingly.

The next item is item 2.(d) Law Enforcement Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee what the one SY is under Managerial? Who is that or what is the position description title?

* (1720)

Mrs. Vodrey: That one SY is the Director of Enforcement Services, Mr. Bob Chamberlain who is at the table.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister tell the committee what the three SYs under Professional/Technical are?

Mrs. Vodrey: The three Professional/Technical individuals are the police support service officer, the commissioner of LERA and the chief firearms officer.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Tyrrell, I understand, was involved in this Crime Prevention Council and youth crime, whatever. I am wondering if there is a mandate now available for that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as the member mentioned, Mr. Gill Tyrrell has accepted the position as a volunteer

to chair the provincial council on crime. We began with an idea of how we saw that provincial council on crime working. However, as I said in earlier Estimates, he made visits to youth justice committees and communities across this province and came back with their views of how the provincial council on crime may work the best.

We are in the process of finalizing both the mandate and also individuals who may now sit on that provincial council. As I said earlier, we wanted to make sure that the council would in fact be composed of the kinds of individuals who had the expertise that the community wanted.

Just to add a little bit, the chairperson met with 39 youth justice communities throughout Manitoba—justice communities, I beg your pardon—to identify the mandate and also to begin to identify candidates to sit on the council.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee whether there is now a fee for enrolling in the training program for special constables?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the training programs for special constables are, by and large, run by the employing organization. It might be an organization such as Eaton's or The Bay, so they are responsible for their own training program for special constables. They would determine if there is a fee or not.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the department developing a training program for special constables internally?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, we are not at this time. Special constables operate obviously in an environment where their direct employer will determine what their specific needs are in their area. We have not developed a specific training program and are not at the moment.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the government have plans to develop a training program for special constables?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, no, not at the moment. I am wondering if the member has a particular issue he would like to raise with me around that, but no, not at the moment.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the government budgeted within this section any monies to develop or implement a training program for special constables?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I see that the member is referring to an area in the Expected Results. I would just like to explain how that works, in that, the Winnipeg Police Services will assist employers who wish to employ special constables in the development of a program. We certainly are also prepared to assist in the development, either assist the Winnipeg Police Services or the employer. I remember last year that we spent some time speaking about how this worked and also how we could be of help.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister explain whether there is a crime prevention fund within the government under this section?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the Crime Prevention Fund and grants from that fund are listed under the appropriation 2.(d).

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the Crime Prevention Fund comprised of \$60,000 which is listed under Crime Prevention Grants?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Mackintosh: I take it that the Crime Prevention Fund is made up of general revenues.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, this allocation comes from general revenues.

* (1730)

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have a list of the grants that were allocated in '94-95 under this appropriation?

Mrs. Vodrey: The awards for '94-95 were Crime Prevention Awards, Street Peace, the Option Start program of the Fort Garry School Division, the Combat Auto Theft Program, a program called Big Mouth, a drug awareness program, Glenboro Citizens on Patrol, the Baldur Crime Watch program and The Pas Citizens on Patrol.

Mr. Mackintosh: I wonder if the minister could table that list with the corresponding grants for each project.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I will be pleased to prepare that for the member. I will have to give it to him tomorrow. The information that I am referring to is on a page with other details.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister describe what the Big Mouth project is? That sounds interesting.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, this crime prevention program called Big Mouth is one which happens at the request of a community. It is where the community requests, in consultation with the police service, the RCMP police, that they go online via computer. It is an auto-dial system. It allows police then to advise residents of alert. For example, if there is a missing child in a particular area, it allows people on the system to virtually auto-dial and have that alert sent out simultaneously, so it is a method of providing information.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have a contact person or a description of this program? I am sure she does if there has been a grant advanced because it sounds very interesting. I have never heard of this before.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the best contact would be the RCMP informetrics officer. We understand that the individual, whom I was prepared to give the name, has just changed to another position so the position is really the way, I think, to make contact.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the government have any criteria as to what kinds of projects are funded under this appropriation?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we do have some criteria. I am prepared to read it into the record. This fund itself, however, is—the community receives notification of it through chiefs of police, through police services. We have tried to make sure that the community is aware of the fact that this fund is available.

The criteria which are used as a guideline in evaluating proposals are, first of all, the proponent of

the grant should not be a government department or agency or a major police force within the province, where we are simply substituting crime prevention funds for funds that really should be appropriately coming from within their existing budgets.

The projects should be as broad based as possible and should have a great deal of grassroots community involvement.

The proposal should address a community need. That is a need, for instance, if there have been a number of break-ins in a particular neighbourhood and the funds are required to establish a program to deal with that.

The grant is generally a one-time grant. The crime prevention fund does not provide core funding and the proposal does not request funds that are normally provided from an established program elsewhere in government. If funds were coming from a program elsewhere they cannot shift over to the crime prevention fund.

Really one of the most important criteria of all of the criteria I have spoken about is that the idea should come from the community and that is one very important way we can involve the community in the process.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is there any ongoing review of the Law Enforcement Review legislation or the procedures of LERA?

* (1740)

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: There is not a formal review going on at this time, however, the deputy minister has asked—the report that I referred to earlier regarding strategies to prosecute police—that the role of LERA be considered in that strategy paper which we expect to have more holistically than we have now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have any statistics regarding the growth of the number of security guards over the last, say, four years?

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not have it available now; however, we can look to provide that to the member.

Mr. Mackintosh: Other than the basic standards, if you could call it that, in The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, has the government developed any standards for security guards and private investigators in the province or is it in the process of doing that?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are, I am informed, in the process of looking at whether there is a requirement to develop standards. Sorry, the member who asked the question and I had a very late evening last night as we were reviewing a bill. Anyway, we are in the process of looking to see whether there is a requirement for standards.

One of the areas that we are particularly interested in is in the area of equipment and also in the area of training.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee what the requirements are for security guards regarding carrying of any weapons?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would ask the honourable member if I could provide that information to him. There are a few errors that I just want to make sure. His term is weapons, and I just want to make sure in looking at the broad range that I can give him an accurate answer, so I will get back to him with the answer.

Mr. Mackintosh: Who is the contact person regarding the crime prevention grant program?

Mrs. Vodrey: The contact person would be Mr. Bob Chamberlain.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is Mr. Chamberlain also the recommended contact about any further questions regarding the security guards act and this application?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, Mr. Chamberlain would be happy to be that contact person.

Mr. Chairperson: 2.(d) Law Enforcement Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits

\$553,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$183,900—pass; (3) Grants \$60,000—pass.

(e) Victims Assistance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$505,300.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would just like to introduce Jocelyn Prohaska, the provincial co-ordinator of Victims Assistance, to the committee.

Mr. Mackintosh: In the Expected Results it states: "Implement the Rural Victims Assistance Program in three rural locations (Brandon, The Pas and Thompson)." I am trying to understand what that program is as opposed to the Victims Assistance Program in the seven Manitoba communities.

* (1750)

Mrs. Vodrey: The Rural Victims Assistance Program is a specialized service. It assists women who have been victims of domestic abuse and also children who have been victims of abuse where charges have been laid. It is a specialized service.

The RCMP program is a much more general victim service, and they do work such as make sure they can tell people where their case is going through the process. They do not deal with women in the specific way, women who have been victims of domestic abuse or children who have been victims of child abuse.

Mr. Mackintosh: I take it this is different than the Women's Advocacy Program office extensions?

Mrs. Vodrey: The rural program is an expansion of the Women's Advocacy Program. That is an expansion into the rural area.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, now we are confusing it, I think. Until now, I had assumed that the Women's Advocacy Program offices at Brandon, The Pas and Thompson were called just that, and now I understand that in fact they are called the Rural Victims Assistance Program. Is that right?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the proper name for the program is the Women's Advocacy/Child Witness

Support Program, but we refer to it as the rural program because the other name is such a long name.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have the travel budgets for the offices at The Pas and Thompson?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, there is not a designated travel budget for each of those rural program offices because the individuals generally work within those cities, Brandon, Thompson and The Pas, and they do not have a designated travel budget for travelling out. The travel budget or the travel dollars were dollars used by the supervisor from the Women's Advocacy Program in Winnipeg to travel to those communities where the program has been expanded into and to be able to provide training and implementation assistance in those three expansion centres.

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand the Victims Assistance Program was at the very last moment continued by this government despite its protestations in Question Period and in the Estimates process last year. It is my understanding that the program funding has been extended for two years. Is that accurate?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, in order to be clear, I wonder if the member could just tell us which of those victims programs, since the name seems to have been used interchangeably, that he is referring to at the moment.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I am referring to the victims assistance program, the RCMP program, as she calls it, in the seven Manitoba communities of Portage, Virden, Dauphin, The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, Selkirk.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the official extension was for a period of one year. However, we understand that because some of the programs had surplus dollars, their actual funding from the first round really kept them going into '95 and then they had a year extension from that time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the government now committed to the ongoing funding of these Victims Assistance units?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, what I said when I announced that there would be an extension of the

funding for one year for these programs was to continue the programs while at the same time we were doing an ongoing study, a really comprehensive study, across the province of what was the required service for victims across the province.

When I have that information then government will consider what service really will be the most appropriate, because there had been a number of issues raised about how far reaching some of the service was, what exactly was the work that they could do and did do, and so what we are trying to do now is to look across the province and say what is required. So that is the stage we are at now.

Mr. Mackintosh: When does the government expect to be in a position to conclude what kind of Victims Assistance Programs should be available to Manitobans in the long run?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are expecting that our study will extend well into 1996. I cannot give the member an exact end point.

I would also tell him that I am told now that the RCMP are also doing their own study, and they are also looking at how they might fund or what other funding sources would be available for their centres. They understand that we are doing a victim strategy, but they are also contributing in their own way and also separate from us as well, and so I will be very interested in hearing what they have to say based on their study.

I would say again to the member that it was certainly I think important that we have a look at what the needs of victims are across the province and exactly what service is being offered and by whom, because it becomes important that if someone is offering counselling, then they are in fact trained to counsel. If someone is offering information, that is a different story. Information can be offered by volunteers, but we have to make sure that in any of the services which are being offered, we have people in place who really are qualified to do the work.

I raised a number of issues last year in Estimates around this issue as well: What was the original purpose of this program, what in fact had it perhaps

grown into, and what in fact was expected of it by the community. I think this is all part of what we have to look at in terms of our victim strategy, and that is what we intend to do and look forward to it being completed at some point in 1996. I am not able to give the

termination date.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair and will return at 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 21, 1995

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