



Second 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

Name	Constituency	Party
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.	Rosmere	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

Monday, May 27, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I am rising this afternoon on a matter of privilege and at the first opportunity that I have had to do so since examining the Hansard of Thursday, May 23. This matter will be followed, according to the rules, by a substantive motion which I will introduce at the end of my comments.

Recently, Madam Speaker, we have been discussing in this House the aftermath of the Headingley riots and the early release of sexual offenders. On Tuesday, May 21, I asked the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) about the release of, and here I quote from Hansard, "several sexual offenders," and I underlined that my expression was, and again I quote, "several sex offenders." This expression is directly quoted from Hansard.

The minister responded by saying, and again I quote from Hansard: "There were in fact three inmates who were injured at the time of the riot and these three inmates were, to my knowledge, considered close to the end of sentence, and though they did not participate, they were in fact assessed by correctional officers. They were released under the direction of professional correctional officers."

I point out and underline that the minister spoke of the release of three sex offenders, that I did not in my question ever cite that number or ask about three inmates. The number was entirely the minister's. After a series of utterly amazing obfuscation and attempts to dilute the substance of Question Period, the minister concluded this series of questions by saying, and I quote from Hansard: "I have explained that there were three. . . . Their release was on . . . humanitarian grounds."

On Wednesday, May 22, I asked the minister about 11 sex offenders and again obfuscation was the order of the

day. The minister made no comments on my numbers and made no emendations to the information she had put on the record on Tuesday, May 21. Then on Thursday, May 23, in response to another question from me which cited 11 inmates released early, among them three rapists and eight child molesters, many of whom had refused treatment, the minister made a decision, I suppose, to come clean. She said, of 44 sex offenders before the riot, 31 remain in prison, leaving 13 as the number released. The minister accounted for five, one of whom was released on bail. Eight, I presume, are floating about various Manitoba communities.

This minister then proceeded to attack members opposite, which would include me, for publicly speaking about four inmates. A careful perusal of the record will show that I never cited the number four, not once. A careful perusal of the record will show, as I have just shown, that the number of early released inmates made a quantum leap from three to 13, about 400 percent. First there were three and then there were 13. This sounds like the refrain to a song rather than ministerial information. In between, the opposition were accused of chasing the media by saying there were four early released inmates.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker, I know that on Friday, May 25, the minister said in Estimates on Justice that she was never told and never asked about the state of temporary absences, leaving me to wonder how she could speak so authoritatively about sex offenders on the previous Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, leaving me to wonder if the minister knows anything about the intimate workings of Manitoba's prisons.

Madam Speaker, to be frank, I find it staggering and insulting to be asked to believe that this Minister of Justice, in the wake of the largest, most damaging prison riot in the history of Manitoba was so misinformed, so totally lacking in knowledge and facts that she did not know on Tuesday, May 21, or Wednesday, May 22, nearly a month after the riot, that 13 sex offenders, including one on bail, had been released. Common sense says that she had these facts at her fingertips and made a deliberate decision to save face to cultivate her reputation

as tough, a law-and-order Minister of Justice and, consequently, she made a deliberate decision to mislead this House.

How can I, as a member of an elected constituency, do my job, fulfill my duties when the Minister of Justice deliberately misinforms this Chamber? How can I, as the critic for the Status of Women, work to promote the full range of services and protection which women are guaranteed when this minister compromises my ability to function by misleading the Chamber? How indeed can any member perform his or her duty when a minister provides misleading information?

Madam Speaker, this is not according to Beauchesne Rule 30, a dispute over the facts. This is a dispute over the integrity of the Minister of Justice and, by implication, an infringement on the rights of other members to truthful answers, for while I understand that ministers are not required to answer questions, I understand, too, that when a minister does answer, truth must inform that answer. From three to 13, an increase of 400 percent. The facts speak for themselves, demonstrating an inability, incapacity or unwillingness to deal with the fundamental issue.

Madam, Speaker, I ask you to examine this situation and rule on it.

I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), that this House do censure the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) for a breach of privileges of its members in the matter of making deliberately misleading inaccurate statements about the release of sex offenders in the wake of the Headingley riot, and that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, before I respond, I wonder if I might have a copy of the member's motion.

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader has requested a copy of the member's motion.

* (1340)

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, a question of privilege, as cited in Beauchesne on a number of occasions and

elsewhere in learned documents relating to parliamentary procedure, is a matter of extreme importance and extreme rarity, or ought to be. There ought not to be matters of privilege being raised very often in any parliamentary forum.

I looked at the member's motion, and thank you for having that distributed, but the fact of the matter is, based upon what I heard her say, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), and what is referred to in the motion that was brought before us, it is very clearly a dispute over the facts.

Madam Speaker, this is a she-said-this, she-said-that type of thing. It is clearly a dispute over the facts. The fact of the matter is that the member for Osborne wanted to stand up and make a political grandstand play by censuring the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) over a bunch of facts that were alleged or unalleged.

Clearly on page 76 of our own rules, it states: "a dispute arising between two members as to allegation of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege."

Madam Speaker, that is quite clear, and I ask you to rule against the matter of privilege because clearly a dispute over the facts does not represent the basis for parliamentary privilege. Simply to stand up and want to grandstand, as the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has done and now the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) is doing, is something that ought not to occur in parliamentary forums because it is not a matter of privilege.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Deputy Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on the same matter of privilege, I believe that the member for Osborne has made a very good case for her motion.

First of all, according to Beauchesne, 6th edition, the matter must be raised at the first opportunity. Today is the first opportunity that we have had a chance to review Hansard from Thursday, May 23. It was on all our desks today at 1:30 p.m.

Secondly, the member must prove a prima facie case. What does prima facie mean? Prima facie means on the face of the record. It means obvious from the record; it

means the case is clear from the record. What we have here is a very serious allegation about what the minister knew, about what the minister said, and what the minister did not acknowledge. Under parliamentary tradition and parliamentary responsibility, even if the minister did not know what was going on in her department, she is still responsible, and she should not put false information on the record in answer to a question. She should take it as notice, she should find out what the accurate and correct information is and only at that time respond. That is the reason why our member said that it is deliberately misleading to the House to provide inaccurate and wrong information, and why you should rule in favour of this motion to censure this minister.

In conclusion, I hope that you will agree that there is a matter of privilege here, that the privilege of many members has been abrogated because this minister is not providing clear, forthright and truthful statements about activities for which she is responsible as the minister responsible for this department and ultimately the minister responsible for all the goings-on at Headingley jail. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice and I will take this matter under advisement and report back to the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Donna Porter, Norine Bassett, Mabel Amendt and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Brenda Béland, André Béland, Gordon Watchko and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wendy Logan, Doug

Logan, Shirley Logan and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1345)

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the house to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

The petition of The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College.

Praying for the passing of an act to change the name from The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College to The Salvation Army William and Catherine Booth College.

**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 Morris (Mr. Pitura), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (1350)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1996-97 Revenue Estimates for the Department of Finance.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, I wish to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1996-97 for the Department of Northern Affairs.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1995 Annual Report of the Manitoba Civil Service Superannuation Board.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 67—The Manitoba Telephone System
Reorganization and Consequential
Amendments Act**

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 67, The Manitoba Telephone System Reorganization and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant la réorganisation de la Société de téléphone du Manitoba et apportant des modifications corrélatives), and that the same now be 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 a copy of the Lieutenant Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 68—The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment,
Real Property Amendment and Registry
Amendment Act**

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that leave be given to introduce Bill 68, The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment, Real Property Amendment and Registry Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la propriété agricole, la Loi sur les biens réels et la Loi sur l'enregistrement foncier), 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 should also table His Honour's message with this.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 69—The Real Estate Brokers Amendment Act

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 69, The Real Estate Brokers Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les courtiers en immeubles, 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 that 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 Speaker's Gallery where we have this afternoon twelve members of the Order of the Eastern Star from Minnesota, U.S.A., under the direction of Mary Felton.

Also in the public gallery we have this afternoon fifty Grade 5 students from Carpathia School under the direction of Mrs. Carole Arenson and Ms. Shona Falk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

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

* (1355)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Teaching Profession
Collective Bargaining**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the document released on collective bargaining for teachers last week certainly did not reflect the views expressed by the public at the public hearings that took place across the province. Subsequent to that release, a number of partners in education have been saying that the Conservative government has been going to a too far extreme in their proposals on collective bargaining. The public wants a partnership between teachers, between

parents, between trustees. Even the Manitoba Association of School Trustees said it went further than they had considered and this will have a negative impact on the morale of teachers in our schoolrooms.

I would like to ask the Premier, why has the government chosen to ignore public views of partnership and why has it chosen this path of divisiveness, confrontation and conflict with teachers and trustees in our education system?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I should indicate that I met with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees president last Friday. She indicated to me that they were extremely pleased that they finally were going to get some relief from the number of items that have been creeping into the bargaining process.

Indeed, she did indicate that while they did not get everything they had asked for, they did indeed get more than they had expected, because in the last 10 years no government has ever been willing to listen to them. So while they put forward this request on an almost annual basis, they have never had a positive response. When the member says that they got more than they expected, they did, but they did not get all that they asked.

I indicate, in terms of balance and fairness, we are indicating that we do believe we have something fair and balanced. If the teachers had permitted me to attend their convention on Friday as scheduled, I could have provided them with some of the details that would clear up some of the misunderstandings they have around things like items that never have been negotiated that will continue to be part of The Public Schools Act as before.

Mr. Doer: I am surprised the Minister of Education would make such critical comments of the previous Minister of Education, and the previous Minister of Education, and the other previous Minister of Education in her comments here in the House. They have been in office for the last eight of those 10 years. I guess taking shots at everybody is the style of the Minister of Education rather than solving problems and dealing in partnership with Manitobans.

It is crucial that we have an agreement on the collective bargaining process for teachers and trustees that has

consensus between all the parties, the parents, the teachers and the trustees. It is crucial that we have the kind of balance and partnership that all Manitobans are desiring and recommending to this government.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), will he put this Tory steamroller on hold in terms of collective bargaining for teachers? Will he put this on hold and refer this matter back to the teachers, back to the trustees, back to the parental advisory committees that have been struck all across this province so that we can move into the 21st Century with partnership and consensus on collective bargaining, rather than on the Tory extreme collective bargaining agenda that we see from the Premier?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, in addressing the preamble, I will indicate that there has been a lot of consultation. The previous two Ministers of Education in this government had indicated—and in fact it was formally announced in January 1995 by my predecessor, Mr. Clayton Manness, since retired. At that time nearly two years ago, he formally announced that the collective bargaining process would be given some adjustment to reflect the 1994 resolution passed by the trustees in convention. A number of consultation processes have taken place since then, culminating now in the action that is soon to be taken.

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of misunderstanding surrounding the intent of the legislation. In addition to the confusion shown by members opposite, I also heard the previous MTS president on the air today very confused about what the legislation will do.

Madam Speaker, again I regret that the teachers chose not to have me come and explain the details, but given that they did not want to do that, we will move to have the details available with the distribution of the bill, which is currently being drafted. I think they will be very pleasantly surprised to find that they have been misinformed very substantially on a number of key items.

* (1400)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the present collective bargaining process has allowed the parties to negotiate nine divisional settlements of zero percent across the province. The minister is now substituting this extreme measure in collective bargaining that they did not

campaign on in the last election campaign, and they are now proposing to take on many items that were formally negotiated and arbitrable under the collective bargaining process and ban that.

How can the government cut \$43 million out of public education funding in three out of the last four years and cut and squeeze school divisions, forcing up to 200 or 300 layoffs in this school year alone, and then the government says it is fair, it is a fair collective bargaining process to ban layoffs as an arbitrable matter in the negotiation process. How can you cut money and ban, according to your own document, the ability to take layoff provisions to arbitration as would be fair in any other collective bargaining process?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, there were many substantive questions or series of questions posed by the Leader. I hope that I get to answer each of them so that it does not appear as if I am unwilling to answer them.

I should say, Madam Speaker, at the beginning, that yes, there are this year nine settlements that appear to be coming in at zero for the first year, not taking into account the annual incremental cost, which is substantial to divisions. I might indicate that since 1986 school divisions have been trying to get a zero. So it has taken 10 years under the current system for a board to be able to treat—nine divisions agreeing to that as the first year of some multiyear settlements, not accounting for the increased cost of increments, which is substantial as I indicate.

We did campaign on this, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to correct the member, but as I indicated, it was January 1995 that the previous minister indicated there would be changes and substantial review of collective bargaining in Manitoba. As I recall, that was prior to the election and it was the subject of some discussion during the election, so the member is wrong there.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, the member perhaps is not familiar with The Public Schools Act and that is why he does not understand recommendation 6(a) in the committee report which indicates a list of items that are shown as non-negotiable. It is very important that the member understands that those are items that are currently non-negotiable or have components of them that are non-negotiable in The Public Schools Act. There is

no change there. They have non-negotiable components in them right now.

Teaching Profession Collective Bargaining

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, we have a government in Manitoba which is deliberately driving inequality across the province, whether it is in ministerial or Crown corporation wages, in government grants, in contracts, in increases to private schools. There is one world for the friends of the government and there is another world for the rest of us.

It is very difficult to explain—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wolseley, to pose her question now.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is very difficult to explain to a generation which has grown up in a more balanced and equal Manitoba that cuts to education are cuts to welfare that are being done by a government which deliberately chooses to widen the gap in our society.

I want to ask the Minister of Education to explain how her proposals to use local economies as a major criterion for determining teachers' salaries will maintain equality in education across Manitoba.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, in response to the preamble, yes, there is a world for the friend of government. The friend of government, for us, is the general public of Manitoba, the people of Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education, to complete her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The public and the people of Manitoba is the one special-interest group that has been too long ignored by governments in this province. It is a special-interest group that we intend to listen to, and the people of

Manitoba elect school trustees to decide the schooling that they want. Those school trustees speak for the people and we are for the people. We know that in terms of equality, in terms of ability to pay there are ways of setting criteria for ability to pay, such as those defined in the final offer selection legislation that the people across there love so much. Final offer selection had ability to pay written right in it, and they wanted that, they wanted that for everybody. So I do not see why they would not want it for the people of Manitoba.

We have equalization abilities in our funding formulas; we also have definitions that can surround ability to pay that will build in protection for employee groups and make it clear what terms of reference can be considered, not mandated but considered.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what the impact of her proposals will be in Winnipeg where the income disparities range, for example, from an average household income in my riding of \$19,000 to an average household income in the minister's riding of \$43,000?

Will the minister tell us, is it her intention to promote teachers' salary differences across the city in the same ratio?

Mrs. McIntosh: No, Madam Speaker, there will be criteria laid down that will offset the member's concerns. The member should know that the ability-to-pay criteria outlined—say, for example, in final offer selection—had the fairness that they thought existed. There are ways to determine fairness, and we will do that.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, could the minister confirm that on page 10 of the Render-Dyck report it says wages for comparable employees in the division are going to be one of the factors in developing teachers' salaries? Will she tell us what the impact of that will be in rural Manitoba where, for example, in Swan River the household income is \$20,000, in the Minister of Highways' (Mr. Findlay) it is \$50,000? Is it her intention to return to the 1930s?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member seems to already have a definition of ability to pay in her mind that does not sound much like the definition of ability to pay that we will end up with.

The Render-Dyck report has indicated that we should have school boards at least able to have their ability to pay considered in front of an arbitrator. We agree with that. The how-to we will spell out in legislation. The final definition of ability to pay, I think the member will find quite to her liking and so I would encourage her to be part of the discussion when it comes and look forward to her assistance in defining ability to pay in a fair and just manner. We have accepted that ability to pay is more than just an unlimited right to raise taxes and there will be many components to that. The teachers themselves had a definition for ability to pay that they found acceptable and that is being taken into consideration as well.

Labour Relations Act Amendments

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, on April 15 of this year the Minister of Labour informed the Manitoba Federation of Labour that he would provide an opportunity for labour to view the draft labour relations amendment prior to the tabling of the legislation. The minister then cancelled two subsequent meetings stating that the legislation was not ready.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour to inform working Manitobans how it is that his legislation briefing note on The Labour Relations Amendment Act changes was given to the media business reporter when the minister informed labour representatives that the information was not ready.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, if the member will check his calendar, on that date he was in Estimates with me, and the MFL had a meeting to discuss with me proposals to amend The Labour Relations Act. My deputy minister indicated to them that he would be prepared to discuss those amendments with him and they refused to attend.

* (1410)

Mr. Reid: Can the Minister of Labour indicate specifically, who is requesting the amendments to The Labour Relations Act in the province of Manitoba? Who in labour is requesting it, and how many? Who in the business community, and how many?

Mr. Toews: The member for Thompson has a comment. Well, maybe you could stand up and say it, please?

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I just want to indicate that what I was saying, from my seat to the minister, was that in Thompson he called the current Labour Relations Act a balanced piece of legislation. In fact, he told that to the Rotary Club. Perhaps he would like to put that on the record again and explain why he has changed his labour legislation to attack workers.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I just wanted the House to know that the opposition House leader has now set a new all-time record for points of order in a session.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, the honourable member indeed does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Labour, to complete his response.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, but in fact the question is a very good one, even if it is not in order. I in fact have said that the act does have a balance between employers and unions.

The problem with the act is that there is no balance between unions and their accountability to workers, and that is what these amendments are all about. That is where there needs to be a measure of balance. For the past year, I have been speaking with absolutely anyone who wants to speak about The Labour Relations Act, and those amendments are in fact a reflection of much of those discussions with unions, with employees and with employers.

Mr. Reid: No answer on the specifics of the question, Madam Speaker, and in the Estimates we were finished prior to the minister's meeting time, I would like to inform him of that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona, this is not a time for debate. The honourable member was recognized for a final supplementary question.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Labour explain why he has included amendments to The Labour Relations Act for this province which were specifically rejected by the Labour Management Review commission in this province? Why has he included suggestions that he put to the commission that were rejected by them in the legislation that he has brought forward?

Mr. Toews: There is no one group in this province which has total knowledge about what is correct for our Labour Relations Act. In government, we listen to all groups. We take into account very seriously what that Labour Management Review Committee has said. We have taken that into account and we have drafted our bill accordingly. That bill will be presented to this House, and I will be prepared to debate each and every section as to why it is important to give workers democratic rights in this province.

Headingley Correctional Institution Early Releases

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

Right after the Headingley riot, the minister wanted Manitobans to think she was in control and now she wants us to think that she is not, that she knew nothing about the early releases and temporary passes of inmates, for example, and did not ask.

My question for the minister: Would she now tell us, in addition to the 63 inmates let out on temporary absences following the riot—and indeed I think that number the minister now says is higher—would she tell us how many were also released not just temporarily but released outright?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, there is no question that this time period has been an extremely difficult one for the Corrections division of the Department of Justice, which has, I believe, tried very hard to bring forward information in a timely way in as

accurate a way as possible. I have been very carefully trying to bring forward that information as it comes to me to update it as it has been updated, to correct it if in fact there were corrections to be made. That has been the way that I have dealt with all of the information.

As the member knows, there was the Headingley riot. The first important issue there was the public safety, including that of the guards. Then the next issue that I dealt with immediately and stand by is that we did call an independent review. That is the way the situation has been taken control of in the interests of public safety.

Madam Speaker, the members across the way have asked me for specific numbers. I am currently in the Estimates of the Department of Justice and will attempt to provide those numbers as we get to the Corrections line.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who could not give that one-word answer to that question, tell us now, one month after the riot, why she herself cannot tell Manitobans, for example, the number of pedophiles released, the number of rapists, when their sentences were to end, how many refused programming, what supervision is in place, when the victims were told of each release? Important questions, Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve answers to from the person accountable to them.

Mrs. Vodrey: I have endeavoured to give information on an almost daily basis in regard to questions which have been asked about the profile of certain inmates, individuals who have been released on temporary absences or who now may have reached the end of their sentence. These appear to be very simple questions but they are very simple questions with very complex answers. They are in fact extremely complex answers which require a great deal of detail, and we are gathering information always in response to questions. I have been delivering that as quickly as I can and in as timely a fashion as I can.

Mr. Mackintosh: One month later, does the minister, who has a wilful lack of consistent answers for Manitobans—in fact, she admits now she does not even have questions for her own department. It is called wilful blindness.

Does the minister have any policy or administrative direction or control over her department, or is she just her department's PR officer?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I have two answers to the question of the member opposite. First of all, in speaking of wilful blindness, there was no such wilful and deliberate blindness as that of the member for St. Johns on the day of the riot when he met with the RCMP in my office and was advised to not comment while the time period of negotiations was taking place and the member opposite wilfully decided to ignore that information and act in his own political grandstanding. Secondly, the member opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1420)

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, would you request the minister to refrain from petty, personal issues which are not truthful? I have risen on a point of order already. She talks about rigorous confinement, will she rigorously confine herself to the truth and reality?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Then, as I have prefaced all of my answers, our decisions were taken in the interests of public safety, unlike the member opposite who on Friday admitted to the media that, no, he had not bothered to report to the police two inmates who had been released because he just did not have time. He had time to call a press conference. He had time to huff and puff about all his other issues, but in the interests of public safety, he has not taken any steps in that regard. In fact, he has acted against that.

Crown Corporations Privatization

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

We in the Liberal Party are quite concerned in terms of the way in which this government is looking at privatization of Crown corporations. We see the value and recognize the value of our Crown corporations—MTS in terms of the communication network, Hydro in terms of the cheapest power in Canada being provided to Manitobans, MPIC in terms of affordable insurance for all.

My question specific to the Premier is, can the Premier give us assurances that MPIC and Manitoba Hydro are not going to reach the same fate as MTS?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will just simply say to the member opposite, as I have said to others who have asked that question, we have no plans to proceed with the privatization at the present time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the Premier tell us why it is we should believe the Premier on MPIC and Manitoba Hydro, given what happened with MTS?

Mr. Filmon: Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite wants to play politics with this. It is his party that privatized the Canadian National Railway and then he says that he is the great saviour of Crown corporations. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would request that the Premier be somewhat relevant to the question that was posed and give a straightforward answer as to why we should believe him now, given what happened with MTS.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: I know the member for Inkster has some credibility problems when, on the one hand, he advocates having three casinos, adding two more casinos, and then he tells us that there is too much gambling in the province. Then he says he is the friend of Crown corporations when his party has privatized the Canadian National Railway. He has credibility problems. The fact of the matter is we will continue to act in the best interests of the people of Manitoba in all that we do.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, lessons of credibility are something this Premier needs more than anyone else inside this Chamber.

Can the Premier give us assurances that public hearings will be held before any decisions regarding MPIC and Manitoba Hydro, any future decisions on these two Crown corporations, will the Premier give us the assurance to public hearings?

Mr. Filmon: Those corporations do public consultations on a regular basis. Their management comes before committees of the Legislature on an annual basis at least. We continue to provide for as much open dialogue as possible on issues that face Manitobans. I would say this, it is very easy for members opposite to always be opposed to everything, but we in government have to make decisions in the best interests of the people of Manitoba and take responsibility for those decisions. We will continue to do that.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Privatization

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I would like to address, as follow-up, these questions to the Minister responsible for MPIC.

Since the establishment of Autopac in 1971—and I am pleased to say I had some part in bringing Autopac into this—since then Manitobans have experienced about the lowest auto insurance rates in Canada while obtaining comprehensive protection from financial losses resulting from vehicle accidents. The Insurance Bureau of Canada has now approached this government with a proposal to take over the physical damage side of auto insurance, leaving MPI with the bodily injury portion.

My question to the minister is—specifically the Premier may say there are no plans—but I want to ask the minister: Are there any studies going on of the possibility of shutting down Autopac in whole or in part, and, specifically, will he advise the people of Manitoba whether he will be having future meetings with the Insurance Bureau to explore this possibility in future?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): There are no studies underway, and I intend to keep the door of my office open to anyone who wants to speak to me.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Has the minister seen any of the results of an opinion survey on Autopac, apparently being conducted by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and will he share these results with this Assembly?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of, nor have I seen that study. Certainly, if they share it with me, I would be more than glad to share it with anyone else who is interested and will accept it on that basis. But I want to also point out that the corporation has been doing a lot of work itself in terms of reviewing with the public, both by request and by public forum, so that it can improve the service and make sure that its rates are appropriate and the services it provides are appropriate.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Will the Minister responsible for MPIC confirm that the total or partial privatization or indeed shutdown, if you will, of Autopac will ultimately lead to much higher auto insurance rates for Manitobans with less financial security for those involved in vehicle accidents?

* (1430)

Mr. Cummings: Of course I cannot confirm that because, as I indicated, there have not been any studies that have been done in that respect, but there is a significant body of information which is available which I am sure the member is as cognizant of as I am, that Manitoba Public Insurance rates, automobile insurance rates today are very competitive and the coverage is significantly generous in relationship to all other plans in this country, and that, it seems to me, provides a fair body of support for the process that we have in place today.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Annual Report Release

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I have a question to the Minister responsible for MPIC.

Given that the minister has changed the MPIC year end from October 31, 1995, to February 29, '96, inventing a new 16-month year, I would like to ask the minister, can the minister confirm that damaging negative financial information was hidden from the public through the election period and remains hidden concerning the extent of losses at the MPIC? I would like to know when the minister will make the annual report public.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, Manitoba Public Insurance publishes a quarterly report which I presume the member has either ignored, misread or does not understand, because we have made every attempt to make sure that information is available to the public and available as completely as possible on a quarterly basis. I am really baffled by the approach that he is taking to this question. If there is a concern, I would be more than pleased to address it.

Financial Status

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, the minister is obviously unaware that his corporation has changed their accounting year, and in fact they have not come out with a quarterly report since last October.

I would like to ask the minister, can the minister confirm that this report when it does come out will show losses as high as \$60 million? Can he confirm that?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the 16-month report of the corporation has been one that has been flagged as a format that the corporation was going to enter into for about, I believe, the last year and a half since it has been made publicly known that that was the direction the corporation is going.

I will not confirm any numbers that the member is throwing about, but it should be no surprise to anyone,

considering that during I believe it was the month of January, we indicated publicly, and there was a fair bit of discussion in the media, that the Manitoba Public Insurance was recording record daily losses, record weekly losses and record monthly claims in terms of total numbers of accidents. But I can also confirm that in the insurance business those numbers rise and fall, and in fact interim numbers, indications towards the beginning of the last couple of months, are very favourable.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, can the minister confirm then that the \$60 million in losses would be made up of \$13 million in claims over the winter related to weather and another \$47 million related to the tort claims from over two years ago, well before the election? Since this government seems to think that it provides competent management, I would like the minister to confirm, ask him whether he would confirm, that this so-called competent management has put the MPIC in the worst financial position that it has ever been in its 25-year history?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, it took the member three questions to get to where I now realize the assumption that he is beginning to make, and those assumptions are, I presume, around the basis of whether or not the monies set aside for tort claims prior to a personal injury protection program being put in place, whether or not those reserves were adequate or whether or not they needed to be adjusted. Certainly those are historical reserves that are adjusted on a regular basis on a review of actuary and adjusted so that there is an accurate and adequate amount on reserve.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, a new question to the same minister is this: I would like to ask the minister, given that his report that came out last year, five days after the election, indicated that \$29 million would be needed to fund these tort claims that occurred, the last of which occurred well over a year and three months before the election, he confirmed that he would need \$29 million and now I would like him to confirm that he needs an extra \$47 million. Now why would it take him over two years and three months to come up with those conclusions?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, I hate to disappoint the member, but probably some of those claims go back a lot further than he thinks. The fact is that the history of

the settling of the tort claims goes well beyond the year and a half or the two years that he refers to and he knows full well that that is the case.

The fact is that these numbers are reviewed regularly in front of the Public Utilities Board. There should not be any surprises as to the amount. Annually, we review them regularly. The internal and external actuaries review these figures, and certainly it will only be a few days and I am sure the corporation will be prepared to table its report.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

During Question Period on May 2, 1996, the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) raised a point of order about words used by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) in response to a question. The words at issue, I believe, were, "The only thing that is in the interest of the member opposite is to try and create a public forum for him to raise his face, and that is not in the public interest."

I took the matter under advisement to review Hansard. Having done so, I find that the honourable member for St. Johns indeed did have a point of order. The First Minister did indeed contravene Beuchesne Citation 481.(e) which reads that a member must not impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a member. I would ask the First Minister to withdraw the comments in question.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I withdraw those comments, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Teaching Profession—Legislation Protest

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, I feel that I must rise today to address the unfortunate and regrettable actions that were taken by a small number of

Manitoba's public school teachers in the Legislative Building last Thursday. Young Manitobans and their parents expect their educators to not only provide them with knowledge and skills but also to set forward an example for appropriate conduct and respect. Those individuals who came to the Legislature last Thursday to scream at elected officials, to run in the hallways, to interrupt the proceedings of the Legislature are not representative of the thousands of quality teachers who were in their classrooms that day teaching our young children.

Many teachers spoke with me personally or contacted me by phone this weekend to express their embarrassment and disgust at the actions taken by a small number of their colleagues. Those teachers I spoke with are the ones whom Manitobans feel confident to entrust the academic well-being of their children to, and they are the ones who are truly worthy of being called professionals.

The right to demonstrate is one which this government respects and it is part of what sets us apart from many other countries. Yet, Madam Speaker, along with that right comes a moral obligation to accord respect within that demonstration. We have seen groups ranging from home care workers to hog producers act in a responsible and reasonable manner in similar situations. It is regrettable that this small group of public school teachers was unable to follow their example.

I would like to make it clear to all Manitobans, on behalf of those teachers whom I spoke with this last weekend that I do not believe, nor do the members of this government believe, that the inappropriate actions taken by those few teachers last Thursday are representative of the majority of our teaching profession. I have always believed that our teachers are among the best in Canada in their conduct both in the classroom and beyond it. I continue to maintain that belief. Thank you.

Osvita Foundation Awards

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On May 22 I had the pleasure of attending, along with several other members of the Legislative Assembly, the Osvita Foundation banquet where Mr. John J. Nowosad, KSG, was honoured as the 1996 foundation honouree. Mr. Nowosad is a well-deserved recipient of this award,

having been a teacher, a veteran of World War II, secretary of the Ukrainian Catholic Council of Canada, active in refugee resettlement, involved with restaurant, grocery and wholesale businesses, writer of rural communities histories, two-term president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, a founding member of the Catholic Foundation of Manitoba, a 25-year member of the board of St. Boniface Hospital and was made a Knight of Saint Gregory.

The Osvita Foundation was begun in 1982 by the Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education, of which I am a former board member. Two graduates of the English-Ukrainian bilingual program were awarded scholarships, Christina Pyra and Valerian Yereniuk. Christina was awarded numerous Grade 12 awards including Canada Scholar, a \$10,000 four-year renewable science scholarship. She is now in fourth year chemistry at the University of Winnipeg. Valerian was also awarded a Governor-General award and several other scholarships in Grade 12 and is currently enrolled in engineering at the University of Manitoba.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature, I want to congratulate Mr. John Nowosad, the Osvita Foundation honouree, and wish continued success in their studies to Christina Pyra and Valerian Yereniuk.

* (1440)

Teaching Profession—Legislation Protest

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, I believe in democracy, and I believe in freedom of speech. I also readily acknowledge that on various matters Manitobans will agree to disagree. Quite frankly, at times I think that is healthy. About the only constant in our society at this point in time is change. A very wise person said, change is inevitable, adaptation is optional. Some people willingly embrace change and others resist it as fiercely as they can. I can understand the hesitancy to change when the parameters of those changes are studied, examined and debated and still found wanting.

What I do have a problem with is those who resist change when they are not aware of what the changes are. This precisely is the case with the recent demonstrations we had at the Legislature last Thursday when quite a

number of teachers converged to voice their opinion on legislation from the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). Actually, they did not voice their opinion, they shouted and screamed and did so with profanities and vulgarities that are unbecoming of anyone, let alone those who are shaping the minds of our youth.

This is very disturbing because, according to the Manitoba Teachers' Society 1995 policy handbook, and I quote: A teacher speaks and acts with respect and dignity and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights.

But distressing as their antics were, even more disturbing was the uninformed nature of their protest. On the same day that these teachers protested in the Legislature, I was able to meet with a couple of them. They informed me that they were opposed to the report of the Teacher Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review Committee. Therefore, we proceeded to go through various aspects of the report, and upon doing so, their tone and attitude changed. All we ask is that these teachers take the time to read the report and to act in a manner more in keeping with their policy handbook.

Cec Muldrew Retirement

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, May 22, over a hundred family members, friends and colleagues of Cec Muldrew met in the Riverview Community Centre in order to celebrate his life and work. All were adamant that this was not a retirement dinner but a renewal feast.

Cec Muldrew is a passionate witness for social justice, who through his commitments, principles and activities, exemplifies the spirit of social prophets and pioneers like Stanley Knowles and Tommy Douglas. After a distinguished career as a teacher and principal, Cec retired and wondered how he had found time to work for money. Following his pre- and post-teaching life is an education in the struggle for social justice. He has been an active member and officer of the World Federalists of Canada, the Winnipeg Co-ordinating Committee for Disarmament, Project Peacemakers, the United Nations Association, Veterans Against Nuclear Armaments, and the Unitarian Church. This list is not inclusive. He has worked tirelessly for the New Democratic Party. As a broadcaster and host of a series of television programs,

he has sought to identify creative political solutions to the problems facing Canadians.

Cec Muldrew in his range and richness is a humanist and like the Renaissance humanists who believed in the possibilities and fullness of human life, Cec believes in Shakespeare's "brave new world, That has such people in't!" He believes with the Renaissance poet, John Donne, that "No man is an island entire of itself." Indeed, he believes in a commonwealth of persons united in action, principle and community where the lives of all citizens, including the marginalized and most vulnerable, are respected. Cec is a family man, teacher, thinker, public speaker, community leader, scholar, broadcaster, church official, fundraiser and, of course, radical activist.

At his celebratory dinner, in love and solidarity, his family, friends and colleagues named him, in the grand style of the Renaissance, as our very own home-grown "man for all seasons." Thank you.

Government Spending

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, members opposite have been critical of this government and especially as it pertains to our fiscal policy. Unlike the members opposite, this government believes that it must live within its means and that we will be judged harshly if we do not. Those across the way never came to grips with the reality and continued to spend more money than they had, and were it not for the prudent financial directives of this current Filmon government, our children would have been saddled with a debt that they could never hope to repay.

Members opposite have continually been challenging this government to spend more money, and this is in spite of the fact that we spend more on health and education than they ever did. We are simultaneously balancing our books, something which again was completely foreign to them while in government. We are not spending more than we have. Whether the opposition wants to admit it or not, our entire society and country are bound by fiscal realities which must be adhered to. By managing our financial house, we have to date—this government has earned the respect of those who determine interest rates. In fact, in today's *Globe and Mail*, it was reported that the spectacular performance of bond buyers is a direct

reflection of the fiscal responsibilities such as is demonstrated by our government.

The members opposite missed the point altogether. These ratings are critical to our province and to our country. After all, the falling interest rates mean that the interest rates are also going down which, in the end result, is less money to taxpayers, monies being used to pay interest costs.

In the terms of the big picture, Madam Speaker, what this means is that business and the consumers who want to borrow money to invest or spend will be able to do so more cheaply. This means more money in the pockets of Manitobans. That is how we are making this province strong. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, it would be the intent to continue in Estimates this afternoon with the Department of Justice in the Chamber and the Department of Agriculture in the committee room, but in order to do that, we would seek leave of the House to have the Justice Estimates, I think, at this point considered until they are completed, as opposed to having to do it every day, following which then we can make other arrangements.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the Estimates of Justice continue in the Chamber until such time as review has been completed? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Ernst: 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 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 Agriculture; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Justice.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply is meeting in Room 255 where we will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 3.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 13 of the Estimates book.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a few questions about the expenditures in this section before we move on. One of the areas that I am looking at is under 1.(b) Executive Support, there is a section on Grants.

Can the minister give an indication what these grants are used for and who they are paid out to? Is it grants to different organizations that work within the department? Just some clarification on that, please.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, we have a modest grant program within the Department of Agriculture Estimates. They are paid to various organizations that hold conventions or annual meetings in the province, such as the Canada Grains Council, Canadian Grains Commission, Canadian intergovernmental conference secretariat, Canadian Shorthorn Association, Canola Council of Canada, National Chinchilla Breeders Association. We have a policy that provides for modest assistance usually to help out with the luncheon, and they range in the order of \$1,500 to, for instance, the Canada Grains Council, to \$500 to the Chinchilla Breeders Association. Those were '93-94.

In '94-95, again a similar grouping of different agricultural organizations: Canadian Special Crops Association received \$1,500; Entomological Society received \$2,000; Manitoba Combined Training Association received \$500; Manitoba Junior Hereford

Association \$500; Manitoba Milk Producers received \$1,000 for their annual convention here in the province; Manitoba Seed Growers' Association received \$1,500. So these are the nature of the grants that are provided. To date in the year '96 to March 31, '96, three additional groups: Keystone Agriculture Producers Incorporated received \$1,000; Manitoba Hatchery Association received \$1,000.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate whether there is a criteria that is required to apply for this funding or on what basis the funding is allocated?

* (1500)

Mr. Enns: The basic criteria is that they are national meetings. We host visitors from across the country and it has to be a national meeting for a certain level of grants. Certain other ones are traditional hospitality grants. There is a hospitality committee working out of the Premier's Office, I believe. It has been a long-standing committee that attempts to provide a base criteria for hospitality grants of this order. These grants are not to be confused with those grants that we have in other parts of the Estimates. For instance, the department also still continues to provide modest assistance to agricultural societies and, I believe, to some of the different agricultural fairs that take place throughout the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated earlier on that he had travelled fairly extensively over the last year to promote agriculture, to promote the sale of value-added products in various parts of the country. Can the minister indicate whether the transportation costs for those excursions show up in this budget and also whether there are several people who travel with the minister and whether the costs for those would show up out of this budget or whether they show up in another place?

Mr. Enns: I can indicate to the committee that the department attempts to appropriately proportion travel expenses of that kind in the appropriate section of the Estimates. If it is a marketing mission, those costs would be contained within the marketing branch's Estimates as shown in these appropriations. For instance, I recall one occasion where I travelled to a western bankers' meeting in Des Moines, Iowa. Essentially the business at hand

was of interest to Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, and my understanding is that the appropriate costs of the personnel involved, including myself, were borne by the corporation.

We have a policy of criteria where, as on my last visit to Asia, to China, in particular, we had invited a number of people who had an interest in promoting their products in that market, whereby the department again, in this case, in the Marketing branch, would modestly support airfare only for the head or the president of, say, the vegetable producers organization of Manitoba, Mr. Dave Jefferies, accompanied me or Mr. Wayne Burke, who was the current president of the Manitoba Forage Seed growers association. There were others that joined in the mission as well, but did so at their own expense. In addition to that, it is usual that we have somebody from the department; in some instances it has been my assistant deputy minister, Mr. Donaghy and other agents. The point man that we used, perhaps most frequently, is one of our senior marketing people in the Marketing branch, Mr. Lasby Lowes. Those expenses would, of course, be picked up by the Marketing branch of the department.

Ms. Wowchuk: So then the minister is indicating that in what we have Transportation and Other Operating costs, this would be transportation within the province. On this line, this would not necessarily mean travel on out-of-province missions?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, staff advises me this appropriation would include my or staff's costs if we were travelling, as we did, to meet with fellow ministers or the federal minister in Toronto. We are looking forward to the national Canadian Agriculture ministers' meeting this first week in July in Victoria, British Columbia this year, for instance, those would be included in that. But as the member has pointed out when I am travelling specifically on a marketing and leading a trade mission, those are appropriately found in the Marketing branch, the travelling expenses and trade promotion expenses.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, just prior to the last mission that the minister went on to China, there was a trade mission taken by the federal Minister of Agriculture which covered very much the same territory, with the exception of one province, I believe. Had the minister taken part in the federal mission, would the expenses

have been covered from the federal government or would those expenses still have been paid by the province?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, staff advises me that they would have still been our costs. We did receive the invitation. I received the invitation for Manitoba to be represented either by myself or somebody else from Manitoba on Mr. Goodale's mission, and I report to the committee that Mr. Lasby Lowes from the Manitoba Marketing branch was with the federal mission as well.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, within those other expenditures, there is an asterisk indicating this amount also includes policy studies. Can the minister indicate what policy studies that would cover that his executive support staff has been working on?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, these are occasions where we will second or hire somebody, usually on relatively modest contracts, to do specific additional work on policy questions. We had hired a Mr. Earl Geddes to help us early on in the year in terms of providing us with some additional information on the Grain Transportation Agreement that led to the demise of the Crow.

We had similarly asked a former deputy minister of the department, whom the member may recall, Mr. J.M. Cormack, to do a specific study on natural gas and where we were attempting to bring together potential developments in the agribusiness sector that could utilize some of the natural gas that currently is not being utilized. It is in several parts of the province of Manitoba. The particular firm that was interested in this was the Can Agra group that eventually did settle at Ste. Agathe, but in its earlier investigations there were particularly interested to sourcing natural gas.

We had also included in this area of additional policy help would be some monies for something like Professor Kraft to help us with the transition committee in the pork question and presented a report to us, conducted a number of meetings with representatives of Manitoba Pork and other stakeholders with respect to trying to assure that we would have a relatively smooth transition from the current single-selling desk to a more flexible marketing situation in Manitoba Pork.

That is the range in terms of length of times from \$3,000 to \$7,000 to under \$1,000, depending on the

demands made of these individuals and the amount of detail required.

* (1510)

Ms. Wowchuk: So there were no special policy studies done either on the proposed elk industry to Manitoba or on the change from single-desk selling to open marketing of hogs? Or with respect to the hogs, would that study have been accounted for in the previous year?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, the member is very much aware that in my view a fairly significant study was undertaken in-house and out of house. It involved my Assistant Deputy Minister Donaghy. I am not referring to the review of the Manitoba Pork industry conducted by Professor Gilson, Dr. Donaghy and one Mr. Gerry Moore, who is an employee of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. So that study, of course, as the member is well aware, led to recommendations, provided certain recommendations, some of which have been acted upon.

With respect to elk farming, there was no specific outside study instigated. I can indicate to the committee that certainly senior staff and particularly the director of the Animal Industry Branch, Dr. Taylor, invested a considerable amount of his time and effort into pursuing the question before I felt comfortable in making a presentation to my caucus and cabinet that a decision to commence with game farming in Manitoba with respect to the species elk should in fact be taken.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to follow the guidelines here, but I hope you will tolerate all of the questions that I am going to be asking all come under Section I, but they may stray from (c) to (d) or (e) for a bit.

I want to ask, under this section, I believe last year we talked about the privatization of the Brandon Ag Extension Centre. That proposal was made a few years ago, and I believe it ran into some stumbling blocks. When we talked about it last year it had not actually happened. I believe the food services were privatized and there was some difficulty with that.

Can the minister indicate what the status is of the Brandon Ag Extension Centre and whether it has been privatized or it is still in government hands and, if so,

what kind of funds are being allocated to have that facility run?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I have to report to the honourable member that there has been really no change in the situation. Government Services is the operating department that essentially has the responsibility for either finding other uses or finding other individuals or corporations or companies that could make use of the facilities. We continue to use the facility as an as-need basis, but no disposition of that facility has been made.

It is my hope quite frankly that we can provide or bring some kind of operation that could continue to allow us and agriculture, particularly in the western part of the province, to utilize that facility. Times have changed, I suppose. Our problem area is the dormitory facilities that are attached to that, the rather extensive kitchen facilities that are attached to that.

We had attempted during the course of the year to interest the Department of Education, Assiniboine Community College, to perhaps use the facilities or some of their training programs that they normally run through the community college system for restaurant and food service and so forth, trying to seek out a continued governmental use, if you like, of the overall facilities. But I have nothing further that I can add to it. What we are still facing of course and what is represented in the current Estimates is our ongoing cost to maintaining the facility in its present underutilized form. We bridle that a little bit because Government Services sets the rent I believe. We in effect pay Government Services for the current usage of that facility. That is what is reflected in these Estimates.

Ms. Wowchuk: What would those costs be for a year?

Mr. Enns: In the order of \$170,000 per year.

Ms. Wowchuk: I hope that the minister will consider all possibilities of using that facility. We talked earlier about the recommendations that came from the hog report, the review of the hog industry and the need for education. I am sure he would want to be working along with other facilities that are offering courses such as ACC and Red River College. It is unfortunate that we would have a facility such as that that is not being used to its capacity.

I want to ask a few questions with respect to training and use of modern technology that is available at the present time. Can the minister indicate what is the status of the technical services available throughout the offices throughout rural Manitoba? Have they been upgraded to a level equivalent to what we see in other departments? At the same time also, can the minister indicate what steps his department is taking to provide information that farmers, rural people, can access directly in their homes? Is there any upgrading in the system going on right now?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I know that when I visit different ag offices throughout the province, as you would suspect they are introducing more and more technological support, machinery and equipment and computers into their operations. We, I am advised, provide a considerable amount of information to the Internet which then can be accessed by those farmers. There are a growing number of them that have access to it in that manner. We work with other agencies to produce different features in software for computer use. I am advised we do not as such have the capacity within the department to directly transmit information between individual farm people. It is information that we provide or that they come in and work. We have seminars or information that they can pick up off the Net that we have put on the Net.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate what plans his department has for the next year to upgrade or improve computer or telecommunications services throughout the areas where there are agricultural offices?

* (1520)

Mr. Enns: There are a number of planned activities generally encompassing this area to extend the e-mail capabilities into the northwest and southwest regions. Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation and Agricultural Crown Lands Branch are feeding information into this program, continue to help Manitoba Crop Insurance in their implementation of the recommendations identified in the earlier Price Waterhouse operation review, provide guidance and assistance to their migration to open systems.

There is a fairly major change taking place in the Crop Insurance Corporation to bring their whole database and means of accessing and getting information fully into the computer age. We continue various investigations and

analyses on how the department can benefit from the new emerging technologies which involves the Internet and the information highway generally. We have had different occasions where we have on a regional basis brought this technology to bear whereby our various specialists can, as I say, enhance the scale and reach of the information seminars that we conduct from time to time in the various disciplines of agriculture.

Well, I can just put a bit more on the record of the kind of things we have, a growing number of what we call marketing clubs. These are usually a group of aggressive farmers, often some of our younger farmers. We have over 100 of those clubs, including 53 grain marketing clubs, 29 livestock marketing clubs, 12 swine marketing clubs and six dairy clubs. We work in the new technology with these kinds of organizations because most of them have the equipment at home and/or meeting places that they come together with. Our whole farm business management information network is a system of 13 computer bulletin boards linked together electronically to share farm management information from coast to coast across Canada.

Winnipeg is the national hub of the farm business management in it, with the system operator located in the farm management section. So this whole field of activity is a growing one. Since August '93 almost 900 users are registered, 400 to 500 use it regularly. Manitoba users have made over 20,000 calls since the project was started in August of '93.

So like anything else, it is gaining, but it also of course is dependent in large measure to what extent the primary producers are themselves getting involved in this kind of equipment and becoming literate and familiar with this kind of equipment, but it is a growing way of doing business in farming and agriculture, as it is in all other fields of life.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister mentioned that there are over a hundred marketing clubs that are using the system quite a bit. Are these marketing clubs, or is the equipment sophisticated enough that there is direct communication that they can access through the Department of Agriculture?

Are those the kinds of things that are available that are being provided for people who are in, in particular, the

marketing clubs? Is there direct communication? Can they link up right to the Department of Agriculture for specific information?

Mr. Enns: As I indicated earlier, Mr. Chairman, we do not have the capacity to link up directly to us, but there are a number of different ways through the Canada system, farm management system, where we have, fortunately, located in Winnipeg kind of the hub of the national system, that they can interchange with the different agricultural interests across the country.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, Manitoba Crop Insurance, the Department of Agriculture, has very sophisticated mapping plans that are on computer that, as I understand, can identify very closely what crops are grown and can break down things very closely.

Can the average farmer access that information, as well, or is that information only within house?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no, but the member is correct, there is this very sophisticated satellite-delivered service. The corporation and other users, I might say, including institutions like the Canadian Wheat Board and/or private grain companies utilize this information gathering with respect to crop progress in this case.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate, the information that Crop Insurance uses that we have, is it a database that is built up that belongs to the Manitoba government, that belongs to Manitoba Crop Insurance, and then do we sell off?

I mean, if the Wheat Board wants some of this information, is it something that the department has developed that is available then to provide to other people which would be a source of revenue for the department, or does each person sort of develop their own database?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the member is right. Over the years and on a continuing basis, Manitoba Crop Insurance is forever fine-tuning its database which becomes valuable data to other agencies. Manitoba Crop Insurance is authorized and does from time to time sell information to other institutions like the Canadian Wheat Board which feels it is in their interests,

for instance, to have accurate and advanced knowledge of crop progress or various kinds of information of that kind.

Ms. Wowchuk: If you would bear with me, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask, just for clarification, there are other databases, for example, Natural Resources has a database. Is this one database that we are looking at or do they overlap? Does Crop Insurance have just a specific database that deals with crops and the other departments have their own?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am familiar with the operations that the member alludes to that within the Department of Natural Resources it is that one shop that provides that information. It received some considerable federal assistance in establishing the very sophisticated equipment which enables the satellite transmission of some of this data and Crop Insurance buys it from Natural Resources for the kind of information that it requires. If it wants specific information with respect to conditions, soil conditions, moisture conditions, I know that other agencies like the Forestry department of Natural Resources of course, usually commencing about this time is extremely concerned about drought conditions in the forested regions of our province in helping to plan and prepare for potential forest fires.

I am advised that producers can buy summarized copies of this information. It is not that it is secret or something like that. It is just that it is not available in the kind of form that necessarily would benefit the individual farmer. The farmer will come in and see a region, see the southern region and western region of the province, colour coded as they are; the member has seen these kinds of maps. But producers can provide, particularly under the management plus program, this kind of information through the Department of Agriculture.

* (1530)

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate whether it is a fairly expensive service, that if the farmer was looking for this information, is it something that is reasonably priced or is it beyond the reach of farmers?

Mr. Enns: I am prepared to table just an example of the kind of information, crop yield responses to seeding date,

information on crop yields, and so forth in the various risk areas that the corporation provides insurance coverage for. It is—just paging through it—different kinds of cropping information which is provided at no cost to the producers. I will table that with the Clerk and make that available to the members of the committee.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that. I guess what I was wanting to ask as well, the minister says the Manitoba Crop Insurance has this information and when people want it, it is sold off. I am sure that it probably does not show up in this budget, but I am wanting to know, is it a good source of revenue? Do we get a fair return from this investment from other departments?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that it would be accurate to describe this activity as in its developmental stage. It has been pointed out to us, and I believe the Price Waterhouse report that took a hard look at the entire operations of the Crop Insurance, identified this as a future source or a potential source of revenue which would, of course, aid the corporation. It would help in offsetting the administration costs and anything that we can do in controlling administration costs, something like that, of course reflects eventually to the producer in the premium structure that is as advantageous to the producer as a crop insurance can possibly make it.

Any data that is sold is subject, of course, to Manitoba Crop Insurance strict criteria to ensure producer confidentiality. Data has to be aggregated before it can be distributed outside of Manitoba Crop Insurance and Manitoba Agriculture and so there is that concern, the confidentiality of the producer is not compromised in the sale of this data but to some organizations, nationally and internationally, it could be very useful in the formulation of their business plans if they had access to this kind of information that, at the same time, abided by the strict criteria of producer confidentiality.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, on the technological services, it indicates that there are plans to implement training for information technology. Can the minister indicate is this a need to train staff or is the department looking at any way to provide additional training? Is this training programs that you are looking at to provide for

farmers or is it internal staff training that you look at only?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that this line essentially is costs for in-house staff training of our own people as we change from different technologies, enhance the capacity of staff to properly and effectively use the technology.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am wanting to ask one more question before we leave this area. Earlier on, we talked about the importance of research and attracting more dollars to this province. There are fairly substantial amounts of money left from GRIP, I believe in the range of \$16 million, and I am told that in order to get research in this province, the province has to be prepared to put money into it before the federal government is going to invest money into research in this province. I understand other provinces are doing it now and that is the reason for the increase in the amount of research that is happening.

Is there any consideration given by this government to look at that money that is in a surplus from GRIP to put it into looking at attracting research dollars? I realize we have passed Crop Insurance, but I hope the minister will consider that suggestion as a way to attract more research to this province.

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, I know that Dean Elliot, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba, shares the member's concern that she just expressed about finding ways and means to maintain and possibly enhance our research position, particularly when one looks at what is happening in some of the other jurisdictions. I cannot indicate with any confidence at this stage or—well, confidence is the wrong word—assuredness that these additional dollars will be found. But certainly I have no difficulty in acknowledging that we are looking within the Department of Agriculture, I am looking very strongly at the potential utilization of some of those monies that the member mentioned to be utilized for that purpose. There will be a significant pool of money, hopefully, as the final surplus position of the GRIP program, for instance.

The member should be made aware that a policy decision has been made to return the producer's share of the GRIP surplus back to the producers. There may be a willingness on the part of the producers, if challenged, to

fully appreciate and acknowledge the importance of research, that perhaps some of that could be used to build up a more significant fund. But at this point in time the likelihood is that the producer's share of the projected GRIP surplus will be returned to the producers.

I am, of course, watching carefully what the federal government is doing with its share of the same surplus coming as a result of the termination of the program, particularly in how they are treating other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan who have significant surplus dollars in their GRIP account as well. My understanding is that a fairly significant portion of the federal share is accruing to Saskatchewan, and I, of course, have made it abundantly clear to the federal people that we expect similar treatment in Manitoba. That could result in a significant pool of dollars that in my opinion could support an enhanced research program. It is my intention to pursue that and I invite and encourage the honourable member's support in this effort.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would encourage the minister in that avenue. If there is close to \$16 million of provincial money, and if that can be used in any way to leverage what I believe is close to \$28 million in the federal account in the surplus from GRIP then certainly together that could create a very good pool of funds that we could begin to do some of the much needed research that we have to do as we go through this phase of adjustment from changing through the Crow and looking for opportunities for the farming community to adapt and adjust and bring new economic development to Manitoba. I hope the minister will pursue that, and he will certainly have our support on it.

Mr. Enns: Well, it certainly is my intention. At the moment the only person who is seriously objecting to it is one Jeff MacDonald who wants it all for Highways. Other than that, you know, I am going to give it my level best.

* (1540)

Ms. Wowchuk: Sorry, Jeff, you cannot get it for Highways.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 3.1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$437,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$68,300—pass; (3) Policy Studies \$71,200—pass.

3.1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$883,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$497,400—pass.

3.1.(d) Information Technology Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$302,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$43,700—pass.

3.1.(e) Human Resource Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$231,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$33,800—pass.

3.1.(f) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$15,000)—pass.

4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$128,100.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we started to have a discussion on the proposed elk industry in this province and then we left that issue to move over to the issue of crop insurance. I would like to go back to that issue a little bit more and just ask a few more questions on where the department is and what is being proposed. Basically, I wonder whether the minister might be able to table with us any information that he has with respect to the industry and, in particular, I would get back to disease.

Earlier on, back in '91, '92, there was an awful lot of concern about tuberculosis and other diseases that were at a very high rate in Alberta, I believe, and I would like to ask the minister what studies have been done to give the minister the comfort that starting the industry now in Manitoba is not a concern to him.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I suppose, in a more general way, the kind of fact-finding mission that I directed, as I indicated earlier, specifically to the director of the Animal Industry branch during the course of the better part of a year, was to fully acquaint himself with the operations of elk farming in other jurisdictions, notably Saskatchewan and Alberta. The knowledge that we have picked up in our veterinarian branch with respect to how disease control has functioned in these jurisdictions, how when incidents did show up with some difficulties, such as the member referred to, the respective authorities responded, I would say, with dispatch. Also, and I have made this point before, we are questioned on that question, you

know, what guarantees or what can we do to ensure that disease is not an issue or a problem to our growing cattle industry with the potential introduction of various diseases.

Growing information leads us to believe that in the controlled state domesticated farming of these animals in fact reduces the incidence of possible contamination or a contagion of disease. I cannot, nor can my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), give the member or any primary livestock producer any assurance about the current level of disease in the 10,000 or 12,000 elk that roam in the wild, along with the upwards to 100,000-plus white-tailed deer and other big game animals.

As I indicated to her when last we discussed this issue, right about now our producers are turning their domestic cattle herds out onto pasture and there is a considerable amount of co-mingling that goes on. There is always a concern. That is why we have in this country, and I applaud people that preceded me and who continue to work in this field, a very sophisticated and some would say expensive system of health checks run by Agriculture Canada have a full health and veterinary section that deals with this issue. Provincial departments of Agriculture are equally engaged in it. We support and maintain diagnostic lab services. We expend a considerable amount of money for the protection, control and, where possible, of course, the eradication of various animal diseases that impact on livestock.

We have been singularly successful in some of the serious diseases that plagued livestock. In my lifetime, brucellosis, which the member knows was a major problem to the livestock industry, has not been eradicated but certainly is a very controlled situation. The same thing applies to tuberculosis, TB. We are constantly concerned about any flare-ups wherever they may occur. I can report to the honourable member that hardly a year goes by that something does not flare up somewhere and that action has to be taken. A herd has to be put down, a herd has to be put on test, put in quarantine, but the mechanics are there to do it. I appreciate the fact that to date we have been able to set aside sufficient dollars both in the Ag Canada budget and in the provincial budgets to maintain this.

You know, when you have the privilege of visiting other countries such as Mexico, for instance, who would

dearly love to be able to do more trade in cattle with us and/or particularly with some of the southern states of the U.S., what prevents them from doing it is because they have not addressed the question of animal disease to the point that we have. They do not have free passage into other jurisdictions as we enjoy with our major trading partner, the Americans, or anybody else for that matter.

I appreciate that this is a long-winded response. I simply say that you have to look at venerable gentleman like Dr. Jim Neufeld, who has become the Director of the Veterinary Services in our province, in our branch. You have to look at the support staff that he heads up in that branch. We as legislators ought to make sure that sufficient funds and resources are set aside for that purpose. That is in fact the best guarantee that we can handle these situations as they arise. I do not see, and I have been persuaded, and I was able to persuade my colleagues in government that the introduction of elk farming does not place this overall concern about health safety, animal disease in any jeopardy or in any greater cause for alarm. In fact, we suspect that we will get valuable data, particularly in Manitoba, where, as you know, we are part of elk ranching, the introduction of elk ranching will be from the wild. We will be accessing animals from the wild from which we will get very sophisticated health information, medical information, with respect to the standing of our wild herds.

* (1550)

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate if his staff has looked at Saskatchewan and Alberta, where they have had elk ranching or game farming for some 10 years now and whether you have looked at the numbers and whether there has been a decrease in the incidence, or what is the rate of incidence of disease outbreak? Again I refer back. I know back in '91, '92 there was a bad outbreak in Alberta.

Is this a common occurrence or has there been a decline in the number of outbreaks since there has been domestication? I guess I am looking really at the status of the herds there, whether there is a serious problem with disease within the captured herds or whether that has become quite controlled.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member referred to the well-publicized difficulty that they had.

Again, just generally, I am aware—you see, that is why the member will see why a great deal of attention has to be paid to the transportation of animals from where to where and how they arrive here. If we are not absolutely certain, if we do not have full confidence in the integrity of the scale of control that is in a particular jurisdiction, we will not allow those animals to come to the province. Where the difficulties occur, in the Saskatchewan, Alberta experience, has been in the importation or not having the rules quite up to speed and allowing the importation of animals from a jurisdiction that then moved that disease into their herds. That, of course, is the concern by those who continue to express concern about that.

We, for instance, have in broad policy statements already let it be known, we will not permit animal imports from jurisdictions that we have any reason to be nervous about. That includes the United States right now. The TB infected animals that plagued the Alberta program were brought in from the United States. As I said earlier, we feel, with increased confidence, that we have had the advantage of learning from some of the mistakes that some of these jurisdictions made and some of the difficulties they ran into by carefully assessing, you know, what the problems were and by the advice that we are getting from some of these sources. So we have developed a pretty sophisticated protocol about how animals will be approved, for instance, with specific diseases, brucellosis, certified for movement by Agriculture and agriculture food centre under transportation permit prior to introduction, tuberculosis, certified for movement by Agriculture and Agriculture food Canada. Ag Canada plays an extremely important—and it is our intention to lean heavily on Ag Canada to help us in the enforcement of these protocols having to do with safeguarding the animals' health.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the minister refers to the Department of Agriculture, and there is a compensation program that is in place when cattle have to be put down or horses have to be put down for disease. I understand that there is also a compensation program in other provinces that is covered, if they have to be put down, for elk. Can the minister indicate, when there is this compensation, whether the province has any share of it or the costs are borne strictly by the federal government and what the compensation rate is for cattle and elk?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, it is a federal program, totally federally supported, and, at this time, there is no provision for a provincial input and/or coverage for elk at this time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is there for cattle?

Mr. Enns: For cattle, not provincial, just federal.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when the announcement was made to start elk ranching, the minister indicated that it was—I have not got the announcement right here, but there was discussion about, part of the industry is to provide meat, and the other part of the industry is for the sale of antlers. At the time, I tried to get some information from the department from various people as to the purposes, the uses for these antlers. I understand that they are shipped. The market is in Europe, and there are some limited purposes for it, but I have not been able to get any information as to any documents that will tell us. What market are we accessing, or what is the purpose of these antlers? Is it medical purposes? I hear various things, so I would like some information, and if the minister could provide us with something I would appreciate it.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, firstly, I think although the act will anticipate that there will be some movement of meat, so there will be a provision dealing with the meat processing in the act. But let me be very clear, in the first several generations or decades of the program, the value in the business lies in the breeding stock and the sale of velvet, and there would be very limited actual movement into the meat trade. But, you know, that is something that is certainly down in the future, just as in other nontraditional animals that have been introduced to agriculture whether it is ostrich or emu, or bison that takes a number of years before prices come down to the point where they could be considered making any significant contribution to the meat trade or the meat industry.

Velvet antler usage is attractive. It is exported to different parts of the world, but particularly, of course, the Asian part—Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China. It is used extensively for Oriental herbal medicines. It is eaten as a delicacy. It is brewed in teas. It is used in herbal wines and elixirs.

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

They claim—and who are we in Canada to take issue with them?—that it increases the blood flow and volume, improves growth of young children, eliminates anemia, promotes rapid healing, tissue regeneration, arthritis treatment, relieves lumbago, improves weak bones, treatment of aftereffects of paralysis, sciatica, neuritis and shoulder pain.

* (1600)

I am just delighted that I am joined by my colleague from Sturgeon Creek who I know is well learned in these matters, being somewhat of a herbalist himself, and has on occasion conned me out of \$160 to \$170 to buy some of his medicines.

Menopause and menstrual disorder treatment, treat kidney deficiencies, and, of course, impotence also is listed. But it is a misconception and a myth that generally speaking we only hear about its use as an aphrodisiac. In Eastern medicine, it is used very extensively. It is based on the philosophy of yin and yang, opposite forces which govern everything in the universe. Health in human involves balance of yin and yang. Illnesses are caused by imbalances. To bring a body back to balance, various herbs and medicines are taken, and that is what really drives a virtually insatiable demand for the velvet.

I am advised by staff who have investigated this on the field that a set of antlers will return to the producer between \$1,200 to \$1,500 per annum. It should be noted these antlers fall off in their natural state of nature every year, and so the harvesting of them, in my opinion, ought not to be considered as unusual or exploiting a portion of the animal that drops off naturally every year. If producers in Saskatchewan and Alberta are turning this into a very attractive economic activity, why ought we not to make that available to Manitoba producers? I might also say that in different parts of Canada, notably I believe Alberta and Ontario, we are processing the velvet into various forms of medicinal uses, pills, powders and herbal teas.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister if the Department of Agriculture is going to

control the sale of antlers. For example, is this going to be centrally controlled where they will be handled through one facility, and does the minister have the confidence that the system will be set up in such a way that we will not have antlers from nondomesticated animals getting into the system? Could he clarify how his department proposes to dispose of these antlers, and under which department's jurisdiction this will be?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member correctly points out and draws our attention to very legitimate concerns that people have, that by allowing in one set of circumstances, you know, the commercial sale of, in this case, antlers—but the same can be said about elk generally—that how will the Department of Agriculture, how will the government, be able to manage the illegal access to the same products? How will we determine if these products are put on the marketplace whether they are acquired properly from an established elk farm or indeed poached from the wild?

I can tell the honourable member that, again, the experience that we have gleaned from the other jurisdictions who had a 10-year head start on this program, that is why there is a very tightly controlled, very sophisticated system of controls whereby, as I indicated, each elk in itself will be personally identified and inventoried, not just a metal clip in their ear, but by a DNA test. That same number or identification has to be carried through each time a set of antlers or velvet is sold from that animal and so identified.

The penalties are—and when the member sees the penalty section of the bill she may be shocked because the penalties are extreme. Would-be practitioners of anything illegal in this business better be very careful because they stand to lose their farm, they stand to lose their investment in elk if any product moves that cannot be accurately traced exactly from where that product came. That animal has to—the elk and the velvet or the antler has to be, we have to be able to marry it up through our identification to an animal that is properly identified as a bonafide registered animal on a registered elk ranch. Of course, we are training staff, you know, to be able to carry this out. I think one of the benefits that we have is that we can and have access to those other jurisdictions that have allowed this for the past 10 or 12 years, and we find out from some of their initial mistakes. We really believe that we can introduce a program in Manitoba

having benefited from the earlier trials and errors that some of the other jurisdictions which started this program 12 years ago which did not foresee all of the problems but now have experience that we learn from.

Ms. Wowchuk: Does that mean that all antlers will be sold through a central agency, or will the individuals be able to make their own sale agreements?

Mr. Enns: What it means is the only antlers that can be sold have to carry the appropriate identification.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate whether there is going to have to be additional staff hired as veterinarians who will be monitoring the whole industry and doing the tabulating and numbering of all of this whole business?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, staff advise me that certainly in the start-up phases we have the ability to do it ourselves, and there is also provision available, will be made in the act, that we can hire additional inspectors.

As I have indicated on other occasions, the program will be self-sustaining. We expect the costs will be recovered, whether incurred by staff or by the requirement, if need be in the future, for additional inspections and the accompanying remuneration that would have to follow.

But let me be very clear, we are talking about an industry that within a very few short years has mushroomed to a 60-, 70-, 80-million industry in neighbouring Saskatchewan and Alberta, and there is no reason why that should not happen here in Manitoba.

It would certainly be an appropriate direction for the Department of Agriculture whose program it will be, to be involved in it, to provide support just as it does for another agricultural program. I suspect that if my expectations of the elk-farming opportunities are realized, then it is a given that there will be some additional time and staff required to maintain the integrity of the program.

The issue will always be a little different than with nontraditional animals, say, like beef. We do not have that same set of circumstances where society on the one

hand demands that a healthy herd be maintained in the wild, that the two are absolutely separate and that the general public has confidence in our ability to maintain that degree of separateness.

Ms. Wowchuk: There are several issues, and I am sure that we will see this when we get the legislation, but I want to ask the minister if his department has looked at distances that elk ranches will be able to be established in proximity to what is an existing herd or a natural habitat.

* (1610)

Are there going to be guidelines in place that say that, for example, you cannot have an elk ranch within so many miles of Duck Mountain or Riding Mountain Provincial Park? How are you going to ensure that we do not have that close proximity, or does the minister believe that there is any concern that we should be concerned about having a domesticated herd in close proximity to the wild herd?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I think it would be fair to say, and constantly remind ourselves as we discuss this issue, I have no difficulty and I appreciate the opportunity of discussing this new venture into livestock agriculture in the province, but the act has not been passed, the regulations have not been totally, certainly, formulated. Issues like this, which we are well aware of, have been raised and are raised. I might indicate to you that we do not intend to put specific restrictions in place. We are talking about such things as minimal size, perhaps 10 acres to start off with. We are talking about that they ought not to be on Crown lands. Those kinds of issues.

I have a difficulty if we begin to, even to ourselves, suggest that well, you cannot put them within proximity of a park or a natural area, that we do not have faith and confidence in our own control systems. I appreciate what the member is driving at, that an elk ranch within the proximity of say a provincial or a national park that has abundant herds in the wild, that that is an invitation to increase the herd through the back gate or that kind of thing, but if I begin to believe that, then I start to lose faith in all the rest of the program that my staff are telling

me that they can, in fact, impose and control and maintain in the system.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I look forward to seeing the legislation and discussing this further. I wonder if I could revert back a bit to when I talked about the various uses for the antlers. The minister read from a document, and I wonder whether he would be willing to table that document, if that would be fair to ask for? The other question I have is can the minister indicate whether—I assume it would be in this department that we would know—[interjection] Can you table that document?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, what I am going to do is, but that is not at this moment, I am going to ask the director of Animal Industry Branch, who I know has put together different information that contains this and additional information. It is certainly in the interests of an informed opposition and an informed general public, hopefully, about having this information, and I would be more than pleased to ask Mr. Taylor, perhaps as early as tomorrow or the next day, to have some of that information without totally deleting his book. I have no difficulty in having as much of this information, most of which is public, made available to the honourable member.

Before we leave the subject, allow me to just once again remind the honourable member that I genuinely look forward to her having an understanding and a hard look at the opportunities that this program may offer to some of our aboriginal communities, of which she has a number of them in her constituency that have expressed an interest in elk ranching, because I look forward to an opportunity of the Department of Agriculture, perhaps in a more meaningful way, working with the aboriginal community in helping to establish viable, economic livestock ventures.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am not looking to drain the minister's staff's book of all the information. I do have a lot of information on the industry, but it is that particular section that I have been trying to get more information on. If the minister could offer us that, that would be very helpful. I want to ask the minister—

Mr. Enns: I note that the member is making notes. I can assure the honourable member that before the day is out she will have the entire philosophy of the yin and yang and all the other little things about elk farming.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister if he can indicate whether his department spent money on the two sites that have been set up, one in Grunthal to hold the female elk, and there is a site set up at Pine Creek to hold the male elk. Can the minister indicate whether funds were expropriated from this department to cover the costs of the fencing and what are the ongoing costs to the department to maintain that herd?

Mr. Enns: Allow me to make it very clear that the Department of Agriculture will be solely responsible for the operation of the domestic elk farming that will commence when proper legislation is in place and regulations are passed. Any activity part of that is solely the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources. It is my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) who has the responsibility of the care, the housing and the managing of the animals that have been taken into captivity.

Yes, certainly, we notice that he is going to be sending me the bill for it, but at the present time the operation is being carried from Natural Resources, and of course we are starting to incur expenses as well. We believe that we will have, by next year we are off and running, maybe overall expenses of some \$180,000, \$185,000, which partly will be offset along with the costs engaged in the housing of the animals this year. In '95-96, we have some \$300,000 indicated, earmarked in the Department of Natural Resources, with about \$60,000 in the Department of Agriculture.

All of these monies we have indicated to our Treasury will be recoverable from a 50 percent share of the proceeds of the sale of the animals. The indications to date, and these again because this is all speculation at this point, but that we have indicated to our Treasury Board that with 50 percent of the proceeds, both the Department of Agriculture will be able to cover its costs involved and the Department of Natural Resources will recover its costs plus be able to contribute significantly to what they would like to establish as an elk enhancement fund where they can do some of the needed work.

The honourable member mentioned the other day the habitat improvement in the areas where the elk belong, in the parks. It may mean some judicious clearing of some habitat, some additional provision of feeders in future

difficult winters that would keep more of the elk in their original habitat rather than have them come out on the farm landscape and cause the big game damage that we spent some considerable time yesterday talking about. The sale of these elk will give the Ministry of Natural Resources some of the dollars to do that. If we run those programs as intended and they bear results, I am convinced that the issue that is between the kind of legitimate person who opposes elk ranching that says we are doing this at the expense of a public good, namely, the wild elk herd, in fact, can be debated, that it will be seen that this is in fact not only aiding individual farmers as they establish domestic elk ranching but also aiding the public herd in the wild through this elk enhancement fund. The other 50 percent of the proceeds goes directly to my good friend and colleague who I know the honourable member for Swan River has such high esteem for, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, one last question on this issue. When the minister was in his previous department, the Department of Natural Resources, I believe he brought in legislation which made it illegal to sell animal parts and now with the antler sales, will that legislation have to be amended? Does this sale of animal parts now open up for the sale of other—I realize we are going back to another area—but I am wondering if it is going against an act that was brought in a few years ago that said it was illegal to sell animal parts and now we are bringing in an industry whereby we will be selling animal parts.

* (1620)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member for Swan River has found me out. One of the penalties that you pay if you hang around this place too long—it is true that I was privileged and pleased to introduce to the Manitoba Legislature a specific act that prohibited the sale of animal parts. That act will now have to be amended, I would think. But it is an act that specifically was general in its application partly because we are attempting in the case of elk, with growing difficulty when you had commercialization of elk legal in all other jurisdictions, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, to have the wildlife officers properly control the illegal poaching of these animals and/or some of their parts.

We now believe—and certainly if you speak to the people in the Department of Natural Resources who, as

the member is fully aware, are not in all instances enthusiastic about the program, they will acknowledge, the enforcement people will acknowledge they believe that there will be a far better measure of control exercised on the illegal trade and business with respect to elk as a result of the introduction of this legislation. So the slight revision that needs to be made, there are several amendments that I am not fully privy to but that my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) will be bringing forward that have to act in tandem to the legislation that we are bringing forward.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I think that we will leave that section for now and I want to move on to other areas in the livestock industry. Of course, we have talked about the livestock industry facing difficulties with the reduced return that cattle producers are feeling right now and something that, I am sure, cattle producers did not expect. I remember meeting with the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association a year ago and they were anticipating that there was lots of growth for the industry in the province and there were really good markets that could be accessed. They had anticipated getting a good return for their product for some time now. However, that has declined.

I wonder what plans or whether there are any plans in place to help the livestock industry out. Have there been any discussions with the Cattle Producers Association, or other organizations, as to the difficulties cattle producers are facing and what steps the government, if any, is taking to deal with this problem?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, I know that certainly for many, many cattle producers this current very serious drop in prices is being felt very, very severely, particularly when it has been put together with one of the longest and harshest winters that we have had that made the expense of raising cattle even that much greater. I hear this directly from my good constituents who happen to be brothers to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), and as I have indicated on other occasions, I have experienced it myself in a personal way as a modest cattle producer myself. I did not want to accept the price for last year's calves so I still have them. They are coming back out on the grass this year along with this year's calves. This year's price is not any better. Indeed, it is likely going to be somewhat worse. In the meantime, we have all put in a lot of feed.

I think this is good tonic for somebody like my friend and colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) to have an appreciation for in attending these Agriculture Estimates when we talk about signing contract agreements even with our esteemed public service at zero increase or with our Teachers' Society who feel that 2 or 3 percent increase is not enough. They should try the business of high risk agriculture or farming where 30 or 40 or 50 percent decreases are in fact being experienced. Cattle producers in the province of Manitoba are having their incomes cut by a minimum of 45 percent and their costs are going up at the same time and these are the same people who are being asked to pay their taxes, nonetheless, or pay their leases to maintain themselves in business. So I have a lot empathy for what the honourable member is saying.

We have no specific support programs in mind nor have any been called upon by the industry. We have called upon, in the first instance, our own credit lending institution, the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, and have asked them to examine whether and where they can back off somewhat in some of the cattle loans they have that are in trouble, perhaps. I know they are doing that where they will be satisfied with less than the full payment required, perhaps interest only for the year. We have asked again through the same offices to get that message through to some of the credit union private lending institutions that they ought to have some empathy for the situation but, in the final analysis, the only hope will be that the market will recover.

There are those experts who believe that this may not be a long trough, and I am hoping that they are right. Certainly at the onset of the virtually overnight escalation of feed costs have brought this on to some extent. It has translated very quickly back to the cow-calf operator in the first instance because some of the feed lots, having been accustomed over the last number of years to buying feed grain at \$1.80 or \$2 a bushel, rebelled at paying \$3.80 and \$4 a bushel for it, and some of the feed lots did not fill up in different parts of the country and the U.S. the way they normally do. That immediately reflected back on calf prices.

I can only share the honourable member's concern. We will do our best through extension and support work, try to help the cattle people through this difficult period.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicates the possibility of shortage of feed and the delays that farmers, the difficulties they are facing, because of increased herds that they are carrying over but also the delay in pasture and shortage of feed as well. I probably missed the line where I was supposed to ask this, but is there a program in place to help farmers move feed?

Mr. Enns: No, Mr. Chairman, there is no program in place to do that. We have assisted some, a very small number of farmers that qualified under some flood programs under the disaster board, where hay actually was damaged and it could form part of the claim with the replacement of some of that hay, but there is no formal program of freight assistance in place for the movement of hay.

* (1630)

Ms. Wowchuk: I understand there used to be a program. Can the minister tell me was that program discontinued some time ago or was it just in the last couple of years that that discontinued?

Mr. Enns: We continue to provide a service. I am told it is quite valuable to many producers where we make information available. Farmers, ranchers, that have hay available catalogue or let that be known to our various Ag offices. We on a regular basis then have that information. When we hear of inquiries or farmers, ranchers that are short of feed can get this information from us. We help facilitate the sale between two parties in this way. But there has not been a freight assistance program available since some time now. I would have to ask staff. About '89, certainly not during my tenure of office, now that I have been back in the last three years.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you for clarifying that because it was my understanding it was much more recent than when we checked with the Department of Agriculture. Just this spring they said, no, it was not there anymore, so I am pleased that the minister has cleared that up.

I want to ask the minister what is happening with livestock dealers' licensing and bonding that has been a concern with cattle producers for some time. There have been a few instances where a few years back where producers ended up selling their cattle and then not getting the money that was coming to them. Can the

minister indicate whether any further steps have been taken to ensure that we do not have this kind of problem in the province?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, firstly, I can report to the committee that, you know, fortunately, we have had no incidents reported to the department of difficulty in this last calendar year, and I am pleased to be able to report that. I am fully aware that, regrettably, that in the past has happened on occasion.

You know, we have a problem of providing a reasonable level of bonding, and it is the bonding requirement that really comes into play here that offers the protection to the producer. Cattle are sold in a wide variety of ways throughout the province of Manitoba, and a consistent demand for a bond that is beyond the level that a particular auction mart or cattle buyer can afford simply puts him out of business, and that is not providing a service to the cattle industry as well.

The member ought to be reminded that last year we passed legislation in the checkoff legislation for the Manitoba Cattle Producers organizations. Among the goals and objectives of some of the programs that the cattle producers wanted to offer in the utilization of some of the revenue generated by the checkoff was to offer, you know, if acceptable to their membership, kind of a topping off of some of the bonding requirements. To my knowledge, that has not been undertaken or done at this point in time, but I just point out to the honourable member that that is still a possibility that could take place.

There are ongoing efforts made to provide kind of uniformity across the country for the licensing requirements, and for the bonding requirements, that an interprovincial licence would have effect in different jurisdictions. Cattle do move from this province in fairly significant numbers to other jurisdictions, and all of this has to be considered.

The western Premiers at their November meeting endorsed the formation of a western livestock inspection committee which, hopefully, will help in the following objectives: to standardize licence security levels; to provide the same standardization in the vendor security beyond the licensing requirement; to enact interprovincial licensing and bonding reciprocity so that it does not

matter if a Saskatchewan or Alberta or Ontario party may be in default, that there will be reciprocity within the bonding arrangement; standardize inspection procedures; standardize fees and collection procedures; reciprocal database access; and the coming possible introduction of electronic ID and inspection as alternatives to future identification of cattle. Those are some of the things that staff advised me were discussed at the Premiers' meetings last in November of '93, and that work is progressing within the various livestock branches in the different provinces.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the Manitoba department doing any work on the electronic identification of livestock, and when do you anticipate that kind of technology will be available?

Mr. Enns: Well, if you ask my livestock director, he would give you one answer, and if you ask the minister, I will give you another answer. He wants it now, and I keep telling him that I have to convince otherwise I-am-from-Missouri type members of the House, like the member for Swan River is and my friend Clif Evans from the Interlake, it is coming upon us. In fact, it was—to not be facetious about it—we are working diligently on some fundamental changes to the animal livestock, animal husbandry act, and it had been the intent of the department to have that maybe available for this session. It is not quite ready yet. One of the issues is the identification issue. I am well aware of the concern expressed on this issue by the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association officially to me, and I suspect that when next we meet we will be in a position to deal with that legislation.

There is the added impetus I am told. I am advised that an important market, for instance, like the United States might make that mandatory for us to tighten up or to regulate our identification process. There are issues that put us at odds with Saskatchewan and other auction marts when our cattle move in and out there. It is difficult to maintain the same kind of reciprocal inspection services when we have not enacted appropriate legislation to cover those things. So nothing is being done this year, but it is certainly being looked at. I think it is fair to say it is being looked at in a very active way.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, last year, I believe well over a year ago, there was discussion about the growth of

the PMU industry and regulations of the PMU industry. At that time it was announced, I believe by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that we would be looking to establish an all-party committee to help promote and work along with the PMU industry. Has the minister taken any steps to establish that committee, because to this date we have not heard anything about it, although there was an announcement of it. If so, what does the minister see as the role of that committee?

* (1640)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I have to indicate to you that, no, nothing has been done, and perhaps it is appropriate that we discuss just briefly that something should be done.

We, in Manitoba, certainly in Manitoba Agriculture, believe very strongly that it is a most legitimate agricultural enterprise that some 300 of our producers are engaged in, in the province. It is in the main returning, you know, healthy economic returns to those engaged in the business. But as the member and other members will be well aware, it is an industry that continues to be under strident attack. It troubles me greatly that that is occurring and, I quite frankly, spend more of my time than I should in responding to letters coming to us from all parts of the world, principally by people who are far removed from the scene who do not realize that in agriculture the PMU mare is probably the best looked after animal that we have in agriculture.

I will not attempt to justify past practices that may not have been as cognizant of the welfare of the animal, in this case the horse, as ought to be, but as the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is aware—the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) is well aware, as the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) should be well aware, and if the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) wanted to become well aware, he could become well aware—of the fact that it is a pleasure to walk into a PMU barn, particularly on a kind of winter night that we have experienced so many of today, to see how well the animals are housed, and to see how well they are being maintained.

I simply refute absolutely the kind of charges that are being levelled at the industry. It is a major value-added

industry in the province of Manitoba, providing millions of dollars of economic well-being to the province, not to speak of the producers themselves, and I for one cannot—and I take my colleagues in the medical community to task because that is where most of the effort is being targeted by the animal rights group. The doctors are saying, do not prescribe this terrible medicine because it is coming from these horses that are being abused. What this terrible medicine is, is an organic substance. Surely, we are becoming more and more concerned about the amount of man-made chemicals that we ingest, and all medical reports indicate that it is one of the best products for the purposes it was designed for.

I am absolutely delighted that my colleague, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), has joined me at the committee at this stage, because I know he feels just as strongly about the future and the survival of the PMU industry as I do. So the suggestion that the honourable member raises that perhaps we should constitute an all-party committee to put this issue to rest, I would certainly welcome that. I think that is a suggestion I am prepared to take much more seriously than—I know the issue was, the question was, it was talked about briefly a year ago about this time last year, but that all-party committee never really developed. I think all of us had hoped, you know, that reason would prevail and that perhaps they would get on to some other subject and leave the PMU mares alone, but that simply has not happened. So I will undertake to have discussions with my colleagues, and I would seriously consider. It is a \$100-million industry worth our attention; of that there is no doubt. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I raise it because it was a discussion we had had. It was a commitment that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) said he was going to implement. I think it is a very important committee, and I think it is a very important industry to this province, one that is many times misunderstood, and I look forward to working along with the Minister of Agriculture and other people who can help us promote the industry in any way that we can.

Under the line of Animal Industry, again we have a line of grants of \$100,000. Can the minister indicate to us, is that similar to the line that we talked about earlier where monies were allocated for interprovincial trade or

national conferences? What would the money in this section of Animal Industry be used for?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that in this instance that is actual program support for the dairy herd improvement program that is an ongoing function of the department through which we continue to assist in the ever-increasing intensive management of our dairy herds.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, under the Veterinary Services branch, we have a vet science scholarship fund. It was legislation changing the vet science scholarship fund.

Can the minister indicate why it is necessary at this time to change that legislation? Is it because there is need for more funds, or what is happening here?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe the member was present when I provided second reading to the bill. There is legislation that we will be dealing with with respect to the veterinary scholarship program. It does several things. It reaffirms, first of all, our continuing support. We provide and we have access to X number of spaces. I believe it is 12 at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon. What our concern has been and we try to address in the bill, it is not a major bill, is that the amount of support is in today's terms too low. The intention is to increase the amount available for educational support.

We also want to tighten up through this means the opportunities of having graduating students remain in rural Manitoba. There is a provision in the legislation that if they do not remain in Manitoba, then they must pay back the scholarship monies received in the course of their education. If they stay for a period of time, and I am looking to my friend the director of the Veterinary branch, I believe it is for five years, if they practice for some five years in the province, then that is a grant. In fact, the loan is forgiven. There are some other little wrinkles, like to be able to have capacity to charge interest on those who choose not to practise in Manitoba. They must pay back with interest any monies advanced in furthering their veterinarian education.

So the amendments are made simply to bring up to date with respect to the level of support, to acknowledge the ongoing need. Regrettably, there is still a shortage of

veterinary services in rural Manitoba, particularly in the large animal category. Veterinarians, like other professions, like to live in the more urban centres.

I suppose, I do not know for certain, but I suspect that we probably are in pretty good shape in communities like Winnipeg or Brandon in the small animal care, but at three o'clock in the morning—well, I had better not mention her because that is my favourite cow—when she is in trouble, then I need a veterinarian to come from Stonewall or from Lundar. It is important for the industry to have that kind of support.

Of course, as we diversify into the various forms of livestock, whether it is big birds or whether it is bison or whether it is wild boar, the need for large animal veterinary services is not diminishing in Manitoba. The amendments that I introduced I hope in a modest way to encourage that from happening.

* (1650)

Ms. Wowchuk: Earlier the minister talked about the PMU industry and the need for people to understand that animals are treated humanely. Unfortunately, there are always cases where we do see animals that are treated inhumanely and we hope that the department has the teeth in its legislation to deal with this.

Can the minister indicate how many incidents there have been reported of inhumane treatment of animals in the province and how many of those resulted in charges?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, again, and I do this in a very understanding way, I know that the honourable member was engaged in another activity when I was doing second readings in the House, but we have also presented to the Legislature a new Animal Care Act. That act will I think considerably indicate our commitment in the Department of Agriculture that appropriate and proper care of any animals, whether they are used in agriculture or just companion or pet animals, that we in Agriculture certainly understand the general concern as expressed by the public.

Some of this is specifically directed to the pet animal situations arising, the honourable member will recall, out of the kind of puppy mill situation of a year ago or several years ago. I had a committee providing valuable

assistance that involved people from the Humane Society and from the different livestock or dog breeder groups along with municipal people to see how we can bring into play more appropriate legislation for that purpose.

On the second part of the question, regrettably, again, the severity of this winter and perhaps in some instances the feed shortages or difficulties or producers just not compensating for the additional feed requirements of some of the animals, that we have had more than I would like to report of incidents where cattle were diagnosed as dying from malnutrition, not sufficient bedding or drinking water available upon inspection when we were called out to inspect these sites.

We have seized a number of cattle. We have seized a number of small animals, 129 dogs, and all have been adopted out to private owners, I can report with some satisfaction. We have on record some 25 cows, 12 calves, six pigs that were seized, five cows and a pig that died, two more calves died while being held for auction. So there was more activity than I and I know the member would like to have seen this past winter in this area.

Ms. Wowchuk: Under the existing legislation that is there, does the department have the ability to find people when they are caught treating animals inhumanely, or, if there is not that kind of teeth in the legislation, will the new legislation address that?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, when we feel—and, obviously, it can be proven in a court of law—that willful intent was involved, criminal charges can be laid under the Criminal Code and fines of up to \$1,000 can be levied.

Ms. Wowchuk: One situation that stands out in my mind is the incident with the—the minister referred to the incident of puppy mills that took place I believe last spring. Can the minister indicate whether that whole issue has been resolved and whether any charges and fines were laid, and whether that operation is completely closed down?

Mr. Enns: I am advised by staff that in fact this particular operator faced two charges, one dating back to '93 for which he was convicted and \$1,000 fine was levied. The most recent one to which the member alludes to, the outcome is still pending. A second charge from

March 1995 inspection is still pending. It has not been concluded or dealt with.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the operation closed down until such time as that is dealt with or is it still operating?

Mr. Enns: I see by the affirmative nod from my ever capable and efficient staff that the operation did indeed close down. Furthermore, a prohibition was placed against that party from keeping dogs under similar circumstances for a period of two years.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the budget under Vet Services, again, I want to ask about Grant Assistance. Are those the funds that are set aside for the various vet boards or what are those funds for \$467,000 for?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the principal amount of some \$444,100 are provided in the annual grants to the Veterinary Service Districts which assist the Veterinary Service District in maintaining their residential veterinary services. We have some 29 or 30, I believe—28 at this time. One of the districts closed down, and I believe there is another one in the formation stage at this time or wanting to be in the formation stage in the Boissevain area. Other more lesser amounts include \$7,800 for the Veterinary Science Scholarship Fund which we just talked about a little while ago. That, by the way, produces support to a maximum of \$750 per year for up to four years, which may be written off at the rate of one-fifth per year, you know, if the party is in rural practice. I think those amounts in terms of today's tuition costs, we are finding it not attracting too many would-be veterinarians, and we want to considerably enhance those costs. But that is subject matter that we will have an opportunity to debate when we redebate the bill at committee.

The other amount of monies under this grant is for \$15,000 veterinary infectious disease organization. It provides assistance in animal disease research pertinent to Manitoba livestock populations. Those are the monies.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated \$15,000 for a veterinarian infectious disease organization. It provides assistance in animal disease research pertinent to Manitoba livestock populations. Can the minister

indicate where these people operate out of? Is that at one of the universities, or where do they do their research?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that this is support money for research done at the University of Saskatoon, partly in association with—they have the veterinary college there—the Western Veterinary College there.

Ms. Wowchuk: Then here in Manitoba, there are no capabilities of doing the research for veterinarian studies on livestock diseases?

Mr. Enns: I think it would be fair to say that our efforts in our own lab carry out various diagnostic services that different aspects of the livestock industry call for, but we do not do that kind of research.

* (1700)

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to ask about the diagnostic services in a minute, but I want to ask the minister, if we provide grants to the University of Saskatchewan for research and diagnostic testing on infectious diseases, are there any services that we provide here in Manitoba, reciprocal services, that Saskatchewan would fund here in Manitoba?

Mr. Enns: Staff advise me that on occasion, on specific programs, we access their funding that may be available from federal or other private sources and the provincial Saskatchewan source for program work done here in Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess that would tie in to what I had said earlier about the need for more research in this province. If we could capture some of those dollars that are left over from GRIP and work towards developing some additional research, perhaps then we can have some additional work done in this province. Of course, additional work leads to additional jobs. I hope that we will pursue that a little further.

With respect to the diagnostic labs, can the minister indicate where those labs are located and whether there has been any change in the fee structure over the last year as to—I believe that that would be the labs where farmers would have testing done—and whether there has been any change in the fee structure as to the cost of having testing done?

Mr. Enns: Staff advises me that there was roughly a 5 percent additional increase made to the fee structure last July and that no further increases are contemplated in these sets of Estimates before you.

Ms. Wowchuk: Could the minister indicate whether these are government labs, or is this part of the labs, the services that were privatized a few years ago?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that this refers to our provincial diagnostic lab housed at the University of Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have no further questions under Vet Services, but I do have some questions under the Soils and Crops branch.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$128,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$30,800—pass.

Item 3.4.(b) Animal Industry (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,521,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$492,700—pass.

Item 3.4.(c) Veterinary Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,462,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$502,400—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$467,100—pass.

Item 3.4.(d) Soils and Crops (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a few questions with respect to this department.

One of the areas that I want to look at is we hear about a lot of interest in organic farming, and many people wanting to look at purchasing food for consumption that is grown without chemicals, and people are concerned about the impact of chemicals and fertilizers and such on our soil. I wonder whether the minister can indicate whether in the Soils and Crops branch more research is being done into organic production of crops and where that work might be done at this time, whether it is in other parts of the province as well as in Carman.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I would first of all like to welcome to the table Mr. Barry Todd, Director of our Soils and Crops branch, working out of Carman.

I am aware, of course, of the group of producers that the honourable member speaks of and that they have formed an organization and are looking towards ways and means of better identifying themselves and perhaps more importantly their products for this specific market that the member alludes to. I can assure the honourable member that the department works with all primary producers in the way you would expect us to do.

We have increased our emphasis on a form of integrated protection. The Organic Producers Association of Manitoba has about 150 active members, I am advised, of which 106 qualify for what they call certified producers. Various organic crops are grown. Actually, in the year 1995, just a bit of general information on some 9,400 acres in the province of Manitoba, they include alfalfa, barley, buckwheat, canola, caraway, carrots, cattle, chickens, rye, onions, peas, clover, flax, garlic, hay, lentils, millet, oats, wheat, sunflowers, mustard and various forms of vegetables.

We work actively with these farmers. We have through our Farm Business Management program funds for the start-up of six organic marketing clubs. I think that is perhaps where we can be the biggest help because, understandably, they are looking for specific marketing advice. These clubs are located in McAuley, Brandon, Morden, Neepawa, Steinbach and St. Pierre, and Manitoba Agriculture supports organic production as a marketing opportunity for producers, but we do emphasise that conventionally produced foods are equally safe and nutritious. We cannot find ourselves, as you would expect, coming down on one side or the other.

We believe that our conventional food production provides safe and nutritious food for all our citizens, but we recognize that there are groups which are prepared to look at things somewhat differently and produce food somewhat differently and put in that necessary effort. The Department of Agriculture certainly finds time and supports their activities.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister has been to other countries where I understand there is a lot of interest or concern about having a very clean food supply. We know of the

issue where we had, within the pork industry, comments made that if we did not have chemical free pork, they were not interested in purchasing from us. When the minister was on his last trade mission, did he have the opportunity to meet with people who might be interested in purchasing organically produced food products on a much larger scale? What the minister talks about, six marketing clubs, appears to be products that are targeted to a local market, quite a small market. My understanding is that there is an interest on a much broader scale to have chemical free food, whether it be grain or meat products as well, so I wonder whether the minister found in his travels that there is indeed a greater awareness and a greater need, greater markets for organic grown products.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that some shipments of goods to the more significant markets that the member refers to are in fact taking place, such as durum wheat in special circumstances but it is spotty and difficult. We do not have, to begin with, a national certification system in place that would make this more convenient, more possible. I have to report that certainly the member is quite right, particularly in a market like the Japanese, very demanding, very discriminating in terms of placing the health and safety factor very high on their list of priorities, but at the same time they are very sharp traders. It seems from my personal experience that price, the bottom line, is still very much the matter. They want both. They have in too many instances at least not demonstrated to me that they are prepared to pay that premium that would have to be in place for simple reasons, for volume if nothing else, in shipment and the cost pertaining to making a sale.

* (1710)

The challenge of our conventional food industry is to meet forever increasing general standards of acceptability, whether it is residue in meats or elsewhere. Interestingly enough, on this very subject, I had a very interesting meeting. We have research being done right here in Manitoba by a company—well, I should not call it research—that uses a different product. It is an organic problem, does not have any problems of toxicity in the control of insect damage to grain. It is an addition that can be introduced at different levels of grain production and grain that is stored under not ideal circumstances, moisture levels a little higher than they ought to be. We

have bridged problems of contamination with grain. Some of the more toxic chemicals that are used to control that, you know, at the same time cause concern among the eventual purchasers of that grain.

Canada has, fortunately, among the highest reputation in terms of quality and safety of our grain movement, further add to it by introducing this product that would ensure safe storage of grain. All too often in so many instances we are advised that, particularly in some of the lesser developed parts of the world where some of our grain moves to, significant portions of that grain can spoil while waiting to be consumed. It is estimated that insect damage to our grain costs our grain industry upwards of \$400 and \$450 million annually. So an attempt should be made particularly if it could be done in an environmentally acceptable way to alleviate that kind of a problem, but I am straying from the subject of the matter. Actually I want to go out for a cigarette, but the honourable member will not let me.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate where the testing or the work on organic farming is being done and approximately how much of the budget is in this area? Is there a breakdown of the amounts of money that actually would be spent on organic farming available or would it be quite minimal?

Mr. Enns: We cannot break down any specific amount that is dedicated to this aspect of agriculture. We would acknowledge, it is relatively small amounts. Work that is being done in this area is usually being carried out at various research centres that we have, at Glenlea, at the university where the emphasis is on less reliance on various forms of chemicals, herbicides, pesticides. The kind of research that is going on a limited scale is done at these facilities, but we cannot pull out of these Estimates the amount of work that the department actually does in this area.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, what I was looking for—I wondered whether there might be one site that was specifically designated for research on organic farming, but I take that not to be the case.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that probably the closest thing that we have that the member is looking for is the Glenlea Research Station where most of the kind of work in this area is taking place in natural field trials.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I understand that there is also a site at Roblin where there is research being done. I wonder if the minister can indicate what the focus is of that site, and if he could also indicate what the staffing is there or whether there are specific people who are working there or whether it is just staff from the Department of Agriculture.

* (1720)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, at the site that the member indicates a problem, which is a satellite operation of the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre headquartered at Carberry, two specific areas of research are being conducted there. One has to do with the use of effluent for irrigation purposes, and then the various crop rotations, crop diversifications that under irrigated conditions are made possible. I will wait for some information staff just provides me. The Manitoba development centre satellite at Roblin is establishing projects to support timothy hay for export, potato varieties, field pea population and various other new crop development projects. There is also the hope for establishing horticultural crops like the saskatoon bush and the chokecherry orchards. So there are different types of research that is being undertaken at the Roblin site.

We have another satellite site at Melita which tends to concentrate on irrigated potato production, irrigated canola production, irrigated cereal production and then some of the grasses as well, Kentucky bluegrass seed production, the narrow field bean productions and so forth.

Ms. Wowchuk: Could the minister indicate then, is the majority of the research that is being done at all of these sites related to crops grown with irrigation? Is that the focus of all of this? Is there no research done on dry land crops or other kinds of crops, or is this done in another department?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, there is a diversity of research being undertaken. At Roblin, I am advised, most of it is dry land research, but it has that one specific component to look—not irrigation in general, but the irrigation of effluent waters and their impact.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate then at which site would the biological weed control program be carried on?

Mr. Enns: My director of the Soils and Crops branch advises me that that work is carried on throughout the province of Manitoba where a particular weed identification has been made and the various biological efforts of control are found, you know, expedient to try to experiment with and to exercise.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, a few years ago we had the Crop Residue Burning program brought in to control the amount of burning that was going on in the province as a result of some very serious smoke problems that were in the area, particularly in the Red River Valley, during some very wet years. I would like to ask the minister if he can let us know what has been the status of that. I know we face some drier weather and should not have had nearly as much burning, but can the minister tell us what is happening? Also, what other work is being done to look at alternate uses for the straw since there is very heavy straw in some areas? If we are looking to restrict the amount of burning, we are going to have to look at alternate uses for the straw. I know we have had some discussion and people looking at straw board. Would this branch be doing any research into alternate uses for straw?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I have pretty good news to report to the committee that when the program was introduced in its first year, and I suppose that should not have surprised us, there was regrettably a considerable number of charges that had to be laid, somewhat over 70 I am advised. This past year, '95, only three charges were laid, which compares to the 11 that were laid the year before. So a dramatic decrease, and I think a very encouraging and commendable acknowledgment on the part of the grain producers that this was a problem and one that they are prepared to help work with the department and the crop residue burning committee that tries to understand the demands, legitimate problems associated with the residue, and at the same time take, into consideration the environmental issues that uncontrolled burning of straw did provide. I think that is a positive response on the part of producers when only three charges were laid in this last year.

We look forward to continuing support through various programs and the alternative uses for this crop residue, the straw. The Isoboard project that is slated for Elie is still very much in discussion stage; regrettably, I cannot

indicate to the honourable member that it is off and running. We had a very successful Straw-to-Gold symposium that the departmental people were responsible for hosting and bringing together various different people from different parts of the world to talk to us about the opportunities of this kind of alternative use for the waste material, the residue. There is a group in Killarney that is extremely interested in the wheat straw-based particle board plant proposal; and, also, as the member will be aware when in Swan River Valley, the Isoboard plant proposal that is still being discussed and talked with various different investors and business people from that area.

We will not rest until we have some further resolution to it. There is a straw utilization committee, that includes the federal and provincial departments, that was established to explore alternate uses for straw. This committee has identified a number of opportunities for that alternate use. It includes everything from paper to ethanol and other fuels, insulation, fabrics, erosion control mats, edible fibre, horticultural products, sanitary products, moulded car body parts and building with straw bales.

I do not take any personal credits, that belongs to a predecessor of mine, but I certainly commend the Department of Agriculture and staff that in Manitoba, partly because of having passed the legislation prohibiting the indiscriminate burning of straw, it has focused us and our attention on the potential alternative uses of it and to some extent we have really benefited from it. We are on the leading edge of that whole examination and while the same, of course, is taking place to some extent in places like Saskatchewan and Alberta, we believe with some modesty that we have a bit of a head start in other jurisdictions. The department is doing its best to maintain that position and nothing would make me happier than to see the fruition of some of these projected proposals to come into being and that straw in an annual sustainable way would be diverted to that use rather than burning.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated a straw utilization committee. Can the minister indicate whether there is a representative from the department on this committee and who it might be and whether this committee meets on an ongoing basis?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, as it so happens, I just met with members of that committee a week ago, I think, or just recently. It is a group that comes together from time to time. We are just currently looking at some restructuring within that organization, at some of the original dollars that were funded under the auspices of this group for exploration, some of the initial meetings that were held. The honourable member will remember there was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Wong who talked about converting straw into paper. He received some support for which he undertook various meetings throughout the province, and, in fact, some trial runs actually produced some paper at a small mill in Vulcan, Alberta. He was granted \$150,000 of which I think there is still some \$40,000 or \$50,000 unspent, and our committee is looking at maybe utilizing some of these dollars to help restructure themselves.

We see continued value for the committee to work, although what has happened, of course, is that you have specific groups in different parts of the province kind of taking the bit and wanting to run with it, and at some stage we have to decide what it is that the potential industry requires.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate then, when was this committee established and what is their budget? Do they have an annual budget that they operate on?

Mr. Enns: The short answer is that the committee was formed at the same time that the legislation was brought in that prohibited the straw, and they operate internally, with internal funds, but in addition to that, the kind of specific project that was funded, like the one I mentioned, Mr. Wong, some \$150,000, but the kind of support to run the straw symposium, that was carried internally within the department.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The time being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would 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 4.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Order, please. Before we get started, could I ask those members wanting to carry on their conversations to do so in the loge or out in the hall or in their offices, anywhere but here.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): It is my intention to deal with a few issues on the Headingley riot examining the minister's own information and then move along. If the minister is going to remain of the view that the Corrections line cannot be moved up, I also ask the minister if she would not consider bringing in Corrections staff to sit with her as we go through this item in the Estimates?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I said, I am happy to have Corrections staff with me at the Corrections line. We have a large number of issues to deal with. That was our decision Friday and appeared to be accepted, and that is the one that I think is the best way to proceed.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would like the minister to tell the committee what she knows—and this does not go to the guilt or innocence of Mr. Rouire—I just simply want to know what her information is as to when this individual was granted temporary absence, could she now tell this Legislature when that was approved?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, as I have said before, I will not be talking about Mr. Rouire because his case is before the court, because the information which may be useful is information which I will be presenting in court, that is the role of the Attorney General.

The member opposite continues to ask for that information, and I am sure, hopes that someday I will breach my role as Attorney General and provide it. That may allow him to conduct a trial outside of the courts. So, no, I will not be speaking about Mr. Rouire, and I do not have information which I can provide to the member opposite because the case is before the court. The member does know that very well.

Mr. Mackintosh: Then, not dealing with Mr. Rouire, would the minister tell the committee whether or not a list of people, of inmates, was put together in the event of a

correctional officers' strike, of inmates who would be granted temporary absences?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that that was not drawn to my attention. I have checked with the deputy minister, who tells me that that was not drawn to his attention. I am told the focus of officials in planning for a possible strike by MGEU was focusing on making sure our institutions were secure, that we had the plan in place to bring the RCMP in to deal with the institutions, that we were able to deal with policing across the province, as well, to the best of our ability. So in the planning which took place by senior officials, I am told that we, the deputy minister and myself, are unaware of such a list now. Corrections officials, when they are in the Chamber, may in fact be able to add more to that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Was the minister saying that neither her nor her deputy has asked whether such a list was drawn up by staff?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I have not asked about such a list that may have been drawn up in preparation for a strike. The deputy minister tells me that he has not asked for that information. The planning which went on was planning which was dealt with at a senior official's level, and then such a task may have been given, but I am not able to confirm that, Mr. Chair.

Again, as I say, our plan and our focus has always been on the issue of public safety. One of our big priorities was, of course, to make sure that in the event of such a walkout, our institutions would be secure. Our institutions, therefore, required us to make plans with the policing service to make sure that our institutions were in fact secure.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it the minister's understanding that before one is eligible for TA, in addition to the time served and under the regulations, one must make an application for a temporary absence?

* (1510)

Mrs. Vodrey: That is the usual practice.

Mr. Mackintosh: On Friday, the minister told the committee that arrangements were made with

Saskatchewan for the temporary housing of inmates following on the riot. Is the minister aware of how many inmates went to Saskatchewan today?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I do not have the total number of inmates who have been placed in the institution in Saskatchewan at this time. However, I will have that information when Corrections is here. I have asked for that number and have been given that number. I am sorry I do not remember exactly, so I will hesitate to put anything on the record that may not be entirely accurate.

Mr. Mackintosh: Were the arrangements with Saskatchewan made through the minister's office or through the deputy minister's office?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, it is my understanding that the arrangements were made from Corrections division to Corrections division.

Mr. Mackintosh: Was the minister's office involved, either her or her deputy or immediate staff involved at all, in decisions to move inmates out of other correctional institutions in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I think I understand the question the member was asking in that, was the deputy informed that inmates would be moved from other institutions to Saskatchewan or to Stony Mountain, from the institution they were in to other institutions? I am informed that movement to Stony required a signature. The deputy minister informs me that he provided that signature and that, for Saskatchewan, there certainly was discussion. Whether or not that required a signature, I will have to check. It was not my signature, but whether it was the deputy's, I will check. We were informed that inmates were being moved from their placement in some institutions into other institutions.

Mr. Mackintosh: In addition to Saskatchewan—and I just want to make it clear—were there other offers of support from other provinces to take inmates?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand that there were discussions about the possibility of an arrangement with provinces other than Saskatchewan. Exactly which provinces, it would be best to have Corrections officials here to discuss those details.

Mr. Mackintosh: Further to the issue of the sexual offenders who were released, we have made inquiries and understand that Inspector Biener is the one in the City of Winnipeg Police Services to be advised by community people of sex offenders who may be a danger, and I wonder if the minister has taken steps on her behalf to reassess the risk of these sex offenders.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, in terms of the CNAC process, those are inmates who have finished their sentences. But certainly the member, if he has a concern, has the option to inform the police.

Mr. Mackintosh: I take it then that the minister does not have concern.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not sure where the member gets his information, I do not have any concern. I and this government had the concern to set up the CNAC process, one, by the way, which was not supported by him or his party. So I certainly have to say that if he is suggesting that I am unconcerned, that is not the case. If he is asking, is there a concern about a specific inmate or an inmate now released, and he has some information, then I would ask him to put that on the record so that it can be dealt with. But CNAC does work where people have been released. So I would ask him, is there something that he would like us to know about in the interests of public safety, because we heard on Friday, in the interests of public safety, he just did not have time to phone the police about his concerns? Perhaps he has done that now. Friday, he was more concerned about a news conference.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister should be aware that inquiries had to be made and contact has been made with Inspector Biener's office. I ask the minister, in light of this information, is she not concerned about the 11 sex offenders released in particular, and has she done a reassessment of their risk?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am concerned; I have been concerned; I remain concerned. Public safety is our No. 1 issue and No. 1 priority. Individuals have continually been reviewed by my department. I can only say to the member across the way, is there a case that he is particularly concerned about? Is there an area in which he believes that we can work together in the interests of public safety? If so, please tell me. If he does not want

to tell me on the record, I will be more than happy to meet with him in my office and to attempt to deal with the situation, but we have had a series of questions leading along, and yet we have not yet heard from the member what he may want to have done.

I am still in the same position that I have been in with him in the past. If there is something that he knows and is concerned about and if he does not want to say it on the record, though on the record is really where it belongs, if he feels for whatever reasons that it should not be on the record, then will you come and see me in my office, make me aware of your concern, or will you do what is the normal process, and that is, will you make the police aware of your concern?

If there is something that you know, then it should be acted upon and allow those people whose professional expertise is that expertise which provides the assessment to do that assessment. I am concerned that my sense is that the member across the way is trying to make these judgments himself and is making them without a lot of reference points, without very much experience at all. In fact, I would venture to say none, but he may want to correct me on that and tell me what his experience in assessing sex offenders who have completed their sentences is. He may have some; I do not know. I do not think so. I just say to him, if you have something, the right thing to do is to please act on it. I will co-operate in whatever way is open to me, but it is best to have the people whose professional capabilities is to work in this area to have them do this work, not to try and do it himself.

I ask him again, I challenge him again, I have tried to present options to him in terms of how he might deal with the situation where he has concerns. So far, Mr. Chair, he has not done that, to my knowledge. He may have done something, but I do not think so. I would ask him again, if there is something that you are worried about, will you please come forward and say it?

* (1520)

Mr. Mackintosh: Certainly if the minister is going to suggest that there be any other revisiting the concept of visits in her office, she can think twice about that, because there is certainly no trust remaining there, which is unfortunate, because there has been a role that the

minister's office has provided over the past where some matters can be dealt with by all parties together. That clearly—any confidence there has been lost, but it is my understanding that our staff has contacted Inspector Biener.

Of course, I do not have any knowledge of risk assessment, and I certainly have very little knowledge of the sex offenders released. All I had was a statement made to me over the telephone, and when Inspector Biener, I understand, returns tomorrow, he will be handed the information. The issue that is before this committee is the minister's knowledge. It is the minister's department that has the expertise. It is the minister who knows the names and knows the sex offenders and has the staff. I wanted to know whether all the proper procedures have been followed, whether the proper risk assessments have been followed, whether there is proper supervision in place, and I have some concerns about that. I will leave that issue, and we will be dealing with Inspector Biener with what little information we do have.

My next series of questions is on the information of the minister regarding what appears to be a history of concerns about guard security at Headingley Correctional Institution. I ask the minister, has she personally been involved in meetings during her tenure when issues of staff safety at Headingley were raised?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, let me start again with the member's comments about a visit to my office and how problems can be solved through such a visit. It certainly has worked for other members of his caucus. When other members of his caucus have decided that perhaps there is something that we can do together on behalf of the people of their areas or the people of Manitoba, their visits have been appreciated. We have worked with them to try and help the situation and simply to work with them, not on a political grandstanding basis, because in fact in those cases where this has worked there has been no grandstanding at all, in fact, very little media or discussion. I think that there are opportunities for this to happen in the interests of public safety for Manitobans.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

The member opposite has never chosen that way, not in dealing with Maintenance Enforcement, which he used to

bring to this House and throw out. Basically at no time to my knowledge, has he ever decided that where he had a genuine concern, if he was to bring it to my office, we would try and deal with that, and I am talking about personally coming and doing this, which his colleagues have done.

Mr. Mackintosh: Never.

Mrs. Vodrey: The member calls from his seat, never. That is true, never.

Mr. Mackintosh: Never Again.

Mrs. Vodrey: Never has he done that. Never has he done that. There was, of course, one time when I asked him to come, I asked him to attend, and he was the only person who could not give us a commitment. He was just unable to give us a commitment to act in what was seen as generally a responsible way—

Mr. Mackintosh: No one was asked.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, the member says no one was asked.

Mr. Mackintosh: No one was asked.

Mrs. Vodrey: He was asked to give that commitment. He sat, and I remember him very clearly sitting and just staring ahead while we all looked at him. We knew then that he was not going to provide that commitment; we knew then on that day

Mr. Mackintosh: You never asked.

Mrs. Vodrey: The commitment was asked for, was readily agreed to by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), who clearly understood the situation. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) simply stared ahead. It was quite unforgettable. However—and then he went ahead and did what he wanted, and we know now the results of that.

Mr. Chair, I find that very, very regrettable for the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), but I do not think it is being lost on the people of Manitoba. I think the people of Manitoba have seen where ministers and colleagues in opposition can work together to the benefit of Manitobans. That is really what people ask of us. The

one thing they ask of us is, could you please work together? Could you please try and make things better for us? Could you, at times, try and set aside what may be your disagreements if, in fact, there is a way to improve the situation for us?

I have worked with members, as have many of my other colleagues, I know that to be true. So, Mr. Chair, it is really just the member for St. Johns who is having trouble with the concept, perhaps others, certainly with Justice—

An Honourable Member: He should take an example from his colleague George Hickey.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, he could. There are a number of colleagues from whom he could take an example. I have to say that is very regrettable. It is very regrettable for his constituents, very regrettable if he has information in the interest of public safety for Manitobans that he does not feel he is willing to come forward and speak.

An Honourable Member: . . . you are silly.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I see the member is laughing. He thinks it is funny.

An Honourable Member: You are silly; you are funny.

Mrs. Vodrey: I wonder if you could—

Point of Order

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, I am sorry to interrupt the proceedings, but the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) from his chair has called the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) silly.

* (1530)

I recall that on one other occasion I called the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) silly, I was told that was unparliamentary, should not be done, and it was objected to most strenuously by the members of the NDP, who now resort to the same tactics for themselves that they will not allow us. I would just ask that you call the member to order and ask him to be more gracious in his words, if not in his attitude.

Some Honourable Members: Apologize.

Mrs. McIntosh: Maybe apologizing would help.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The Chair was concentrating on the remarks that were coming from the Minister of Justice and did not hear any remarks coming from across the floor. If the honourable member for St. Johns were alluding to the fact that the Minister of Justice was silly or that any of her actions were silly, he would immediately be brought to order on that point. I thank the honourable minister for that.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I would invite the honourable Minister of Justice, to continue with her remarks, having approximately six minutes to complete her answer.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Well, the member did indeed say that, but we hear a lot coming out of his mouth—

An Honourable Member: That he will not acknowledge.

Mrs. Vodrey: That he will not acknowledge. He does not have the courage to put certain things on the record. He does this from sort of behind. He would like to slide over that now.

Mr. Chair, the other question or comment was have I had any discussions regarding the safety and security of correctional officers. I believe he means in all of our institutions or in Headingley specifically. I have sat down with senior Corrections staff. The issue of range bars, as I have said, has had discussion. I understood the process that was being followed, but I have given direction to the department that the issue of the range bars is no longer to be considered, that that is clearly a matter to be off the table.

The other issue which had been raised—this was the second issue—was whether or not inmates and correctional officers should eat together. That issue had been raised and the explanation was given about the up close supervision. However, Mr. Chair, that is an issue that

the guards were very unhappy with, so I have given the direction that that is simply to be off the table now also.

As the member knows, we have a working group, a back to work group working at Headingley, and they will be dealing with other matters, the issue of locks and other security issues. Commitment was given by this government at the time when guards were off duty and RCMP was on duty in our correctional institutions. I hesitate to put a specific word to that, because I do not want to be incorrect in what I would call it, but a number of issues were dealt with at that time. I am pleased with that and certainly am very happy now that there is a communication process set up so that guards or correctional officers can be more confident perhaps in the communications process. I think that is a very important part.

Mr. Mackintosh: My question to the minister was, was she aware before the riot of security concerns by the Headingley correctional officers, in particular equipment problems, the problem of they key accessing spaces throughout the institution, the issue of range bars certainly, eating together, as well as other changes in security affecting the nursing staff, for example? Was she aware or had these matters been brought to her attention before the riot and during her term of office?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, there was in the past a committee process also in place, not just the one that is there now. There has always been a committee process in place, a workplace safety committee, and issues were discussed at that, I gather on a regular basis. I gather minutes were kept at these as well, and routinely senior Corrections officials dealt with any issues which were brought forward by guards.

The issues which I have specifically mentioned, issues of range bars, did specifically come to me. I asked questions around that and wanted to make sure that nothing was done unless there was a full understanding and process in place to deal with any concerns. That now is off the table because that decision was made to give assurances to correctional officers right away that, if that issue was one which does not seem to be able to be resolved through the usual course of the workplace safety meetings, then that one should be off the table.

The other issues that I mentioned including whether or not Corrections officers eat with inmates, that also was an issue brought to me around which I did quite a bit of questioning, wanted to know what correctional practice was in other areas, and that, too, is off the table now. That, too, is one in which I have acted upon.

I know that there was a newspaper article around nursing staff, and I was prepared to answer that. I certainly questioned my department on that in terms of were there any changes, what the security was, and had detailed information on that brought to my attention. But, as a general rule, the issues of security and safety are dealt with by the workplace safety committee, as it was, and it may now be renamed because we do have new committee structures with the back-to-work at Headingley committee, and minutes were kept and issues were generally resolved or dealt with at the officials' level.

Mr. Mackintosh: During the minister's tenure and up to the time of the Headingley riot, had the issue of staff levels at Headingley been brought to her attention insofar as the staff level was alleged to have been insufficient to adequately protect the guards?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, to my knowledge, the issue of staff levels as being insufficient to protect the guards or correctional officers was not brought to my attention. As I have said in Question Period, historically, because the population was higher, there were more correctional officers at Headingley, and then when this government built the Remand Centre, which was able to house some of that population, then some of the correctional officers then moved with that population. So, although I am aware that there are changes in actual number, there have also been, I am told, changes in population.

Mr. Mackintosh: Was the minister of the view that 19 staff to 321 inmates was sufficient to allow her staff safety?

Mrs. Vodrey: In answering the question, I just want to set a context for the member because I think it is important to say that public safety is the No. 1 issue for the Department of Justice, one of the major priorities of this government, and in all ways we have acted in the interests of public safety. At the time of the riot, our first interest was in public safety, the public safety and security of guards, correctional officers, and other

individuals in the Headingley area. That is why we followed the direction of the RCMP; that is why we dealt with the issue as we did. Then, Mr. Chair, the next step that I took in the interests of public safety on behalf of this government is the step to call the independent review by Mr. Hughes. Those are two very important steps in the interests of public safety.

* (1540)

Mr. Chair, one of the issues which I have asked Mr. Hughes to look at is the issue of staffing levels, and that information which I had received indicated that ratios were not different. In fact, they were better than in some other institutions across the country. That is the information that I received.

However, Mr. Chair, we want to know what were the causes or the events leading up to the Headingley riot, and in looking at the causes leading up to the Headingley riot, one of the issues which I have asked to be examined is that of staffing levels, and we will be waiting for Mr. Hughes' assessment of the causes of the Headingley riot, and, certainly, we will be intending to act upon them.

Mr. Chair, we do not want to have an event such as a riot like this occur again, and that is why we did this in the interest of public safety, calling the review. Mr. Hughes will be examining that, and we look forward to his assessment around staffing levels.

Mr. Mackintosh: Before I leave this, I want the minister to state clearly for the record whether it is her view that the RCMP asked opposition, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and myself, at a meeting in her office not to make political comment following our meeting. Is that her position? I want that clearly for the record.

Mrs. Vodrey: I did ask members to come in to meet with a senior official of the RCMP, so that they were fully aware of what was happening at the time. At the time, there was still negotiation underway, and we did not yet have an accurate view about exactly what we might find within the institution. This was early in the afternoon. As we know, there were already comments that there had been deaths, not from us, not from any official spokesperson whatsoever, and that there had been

severe mutilation such as castration. That was already a comment out there.

These had a very serious effect on families of Corrections officers, on families of inmates, on families of police officers, as they were sitting back watching, trying to assess what was the level of danger that was going on within the institution, what, in fact, might have to be the ultimate step.

Mr. Chair, we were told at this point that the method of bargaining or what had been asked for was not at this point organized, that there did not appear to be a regular set of demands, that things were fluctuating. There was a great deal of flux going on during that whole time, and it is our understanding—I apologize for taking a couple of moments to check because I want to be very clear that I put on the record the potentially dangerous situation that we were dealing with at the time, that the RCMP, in particular, was dealing with.

At the time, we were not sure if, in fact, there were hostages being held, inmates who were being held as hostages. We were aware at this time that correctional officers were now outside, but we were not clear about whether or not inmates were being held as hostages. Therefore, the suggested behaviour was that public comment would not be helpful at this time. That was certainly the position that I adopted. I adopted it historically, having, as I have said before, listened and watched my father as a hostage negotiator, as a police officer. I am well aware that they must be in charge of the situation, and that it is their information, that it is their recommendations which we believe were the ones to be followed. So I set the situation forward, asked the RCMP to comment.

It was clear that public political comment appeared not to be in the best interests of that situation. I have to say that I am very, very thankful that things worked out as they did, and that the member from St. Johns' (Mr. Mackintosh) inflammatory behaviour did not fan the situation further. It was very, very, very serious, and as much as I could divulge to him on that day, and as much as the RCMP were able to say to him, was said. The member from The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) understood that right away. If the member asked, did the RCMP order him not to speak, they did not order him, but what we asked and what was asked in that room, Mr. Chair,

was a commitment not to speak publicly. Yes, and the member from St. Johns could not give that commitment.

Mr. Mackintosh: I regret the lack of truthfulness from this minister on this issue. She knows full well the RCMP made no request of me. She said they made a request of her. I think it is very unfortunate the minister would use this meeting for her own ends now. It is also well known to the minister that the comment from us was in the way of questions and asking for an inquiry, nothing that would inflame anything. But that is a matter that I am afraid will taint her office and taint this minister, to treat a meeting like that by advancing her own ideas that were not related to what took place there.

I ask the minister to confirm or deny information that came to me today, that new staff has been assigned to senior management at Headingley Correctional Institution, including the assignment, either temporarily or otherwise, on an acting basis or full-time, of the individual responsible for that institution. Can she tell the committee if changes have been made?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the only person tainted around behaviour on the day of the riot is the member for St. Johns, and that is clear in the public's mind.

I am speaking on Hansard and all comments are recorded, and therefore I always want to be careful that nothing said is—I cannot think of any other way to put it than that it gives people ideas at another time of how they might construct a riot or how they might act at the time of a riot.

The member across the way has very often said to us, outline specifically what the security process is for a certain issue, and I have said to him, why would I give criminals a blueprint? Why would I give them a blueprint?

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, I have to continue to raise the issue of the truthfulness of this minister, and I will ask her to clarify for the record, so she will avoid future matters of privilege. I had asked her to explain what the Youth Crime Intervention Team had as its policies, what its modus operandi was. That is what the questioning was, a team, by the way, that I

understand was not doing any surveillance, interagency surveillance, as the minister claimed. That was the matter. I did not ask to know whether someone was hiding in a bush or not, for crying out loud. I simply wanted to know if there was surveillance, if it was through computer, what agencies were involved, so I want the minister to clarify that because she is digging herself deeper. It is not doing anything for the office of Attorney General in this province that we have a minister who puts on the record matters that are simply not true.

* (1550)

An Honourable Member: On the same point of order.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order, but before we proceed with the comments from the honourable Minister of—sorry—Education, excuse me.

I would invite all members of this committee when they are placing matters on the record, and these are matters of a sensitive nature or a contestable nature, that they direct their remarks to the Chair in order to make the free flow of debate proceed in an orderly fashion. I would vigorously urge all members of this committee to comply with that request.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The member has twice now called into question the truthfulness of the Minister of Justice's responses, which I believe is unparliamentary even in the committee level. Secondly, the member asked a question which the minister was clearly answering, the minister explaining that to divulge computerized systems, security systems, all of those things that are in place to protect the public, to reveal those for the record is to do exactly as the Minister of Justice was explaining which would be to tell people who have evil intent how to get around the things. So I think she was clearly answering the question, and the member had no point of order in saying that the minister was not being relevant. She was being relevant, very much so.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The honourable member for St. Johns—and may I just interrupt the honourable member for St. Johns. Are you speaking to the existing point of order that is on the Order Paper at this point in time, or are you raising a new point of order arising out of remarks that are being made?

Mr. Mackintosh: I will simply say, Mr. Chair, if anything unparliamentary has been said, then I will address that; otherwise, I wish the minister would address the question. We have the public interest to consider here, not some nonsense and debate through a point of order from other members.

An Honourable Member: It is your point of order—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Order, please.

An Honourable Member: I have a right to respond to your point of order.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Order. I would advise members of the committee that I have listened most carefully to all the debates and comments that have been placed on the record. I find that the honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order, that, in fact, the Minister of Justice and the member for St. Johns have a dispute on the facts. I would ask that debate resume in an orderly fashion on the issue of the examination of the issue under debate.

I would at this point urge most vigorously and assiduously that all members please confine their language to a respectful nature for one another and for this process and for the business of the governance that we are about today.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Having said those few remarks, the Minister of Justice, I believe, was completing her answer. I note that the minister has approximately five minutes left and I apologize, my time records may be a little inaccurate at this time, but I would invite the Minister of Justice to proceed.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I believe that the Hansard will show some of the specific measures that the member has asked me to speak about publicly, and, yes, one of them was to discuss the surveillance practices that may be in place in the area of youth crime. Each time I have said, tempting as it may be, to lay out before the people of Manitoba all of the surveillance tactics. That does not seem to be in the best interests of public safety, and that in the interests of

public safety I will not be doing that because it would just lay out a blueprint for criminals. So in terms of responding to the issue of the member and how he is tainted around his behaviour on the day of the riot, I am always tempted to give further and further information. I believe that in the interests of public security, of not laying out a plan for any individual who may in the future wish to take over an institution, a building, an office, a store, a school, who may wish to take over any, any area, any public area or any institution, I would not put on the record today some of the background reasons in asking for a commitment to not speak publicly during the time of negotiation.

It was clearly stated at that time there will be a lot to say following, when we bring this to a conclusion, when we have brought the riot to a conclusion. It was fully understood, whatever needed to be said by opposition members would be said then, but at the time of the sensitive negotiations, there was a discussion around why it would be not helpful for members to go out and speak publicly, and the member for St. Johns chose to not abide by that. We could not get a commitment.

That does bring into consideration for me very seriously how one can have a working relationship with a member of the opposition who would like to have access to information which may, in fact, be somewhat private and we want to be careful with, because we can never get that commitment, or we certainly have not had it in the past.

The question the member raises is, has there been a change now in the administration of Headingley Institution. I am informed, yes, the answer is yes, that there is now in place a person who will now act as superintendent and is not being appointed in an acting capacity but has received an appointment.

Mr. Mackintosh: Who is the individual who has received the appointment?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: There is an individual who has received the assignment as superintendent of Headingley Correctional Institution. This person is Mr. Reg Forester from the Corrections division.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister tell the committee of any other reassignments following on this assignment?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is a question that I think is best left until Corrections officials are here, so they can describe any other reassignments which may have taken place with the reassignment of Reg Forester to the superintendent's position at Headingly institution.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister tell us whatever happened to Mr. Krocker?

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not have a lot of details about Mr. Krocker's new position or the work that he may be doing within government. I can tell the member that I was informed that Mr. Krocker had asked for reassignment, and when he had asked for reassignment, the civil service became involved to look at what that reassignment may be. I am told that he has now been reassigned within government. I am not able to tell the member what that reassignment is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Why can the minister not tell us about his reassignment? Does she not know?

* (1600)

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I do not have the details of what Mr. Krocker is undertaking at the moment, and when we get to the Corrections line, I will be happy to inquire of Corrections officials what, in fact, Mr. Krocker is doing now, but I think that among the important issues was that he did ask for reassignment. I understand the Civil Service Commission was involved in that and that this has taken place.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister tell the committee whether Mr. Krocker is still serving in the Department of Justice?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that, yes, he is still considered an employee of the Department of Justice. Whether or not he will be seconded elsewhere in government, I am not able to tell the member at this time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it the member's understanding that he is now currently assigned in the Human Resource Services branch of the Department of Justice?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told, no, he is not at the moment.

Mr. Mackintosh: What division in the Department of Justice is Mr. Krocker now serving?

Mrs. Vodrey: The member is asking details about a staffperson that is, in fact, a personnel issue, and I do not have those details. As the member knows, ministers do not reach in and manage the personnel issues specifically. If that was to be done, the member would then call that there had been political interference in the management of placement of individuals within the department. I have told him from the beginning that when Corrections is here, I will be happy to update him on what work and where Mr. Krocker is undertaking that work and what the work is.

I have told him I do not have that information. We have now taken, well, approximately an hour of our Estimates time where, in fact, I have said to him the detail he is asking should be answered when Corrections officials are here, and though I can give him a general answer, the specifics of my answer should be managed when Corrections are here.

Mr. Mackintosh: I take it from the minister's response then that Mr. Krocker is serving in the Corrections branch. Is that correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am told by the executive director of Human Resources that we cannot confirm at the moment where Mr. Krocker is being placed, and though they would like me to tell them, I am not able to confirm that and will be happy to when Corrections is here.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister explain—there is public interest, there is interest by staff who would like to know where Mr. Krocker is. There are all kinds of rumours going on there.

This individual is paid for by the public. He performs a public function. Is he or is he not in the Corrections branch? What is the secret? Is there some good reason for some kind of a cover-up here? Why are they stonewalling on this?

Mrs. Vodrey: No cover-up, no nothing, no effort to cover up. I have told you to the best of my knowledge he is still an employee of the Department of Justice, but the executive director of Human Resources has told me that

he is not able to confirm exactly which branch, which division or which part of a division Mr. Krockner is currently working in. I am aware of the fact that there was discussion that he may do work with other parts of government. I am not able to tell the member right now, but will when Corrections is here, or I will make sure that I know when we sit next in the Estimates of the Department of Justice where in fact Mr. Krockner is placed.

The member suddenly asks about a member within the department, and I know, and I think it is very important to say, that whatever decisions were reached were reached within an agreement with the civil service and with Mr. Krockner himself. I think it is important to say again that this is a personnel matter. Though the member says, well, this is somebody paid for by the taxpayers and so on, well, so is every person within government and on government's payroll, but ministers do not generally stand up about any individual within their department and try and explain where they are. [interjection]

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says, well, this just is not any old member of the government and employee of the government, and I agree that there is certainly interest around what the former superintendent of Headingley is currently doing. In response to that interest, I have told the member that I will find out exactly what he is doing and I will bring it back.

But, you see, the member himself says, well, there are lots of rumours about this guy, and there are lots of rumours about what he might be doing. That is exactly what I want to avoid, exactly I want to avoid. I want to avoid saying, oh, well, I think he might be doing this or I think he might be doing that. There is no point in adding to the list of rumours that the member, according to the rumour mill that is a source of information all the time, seems to have. He today admits that his information comes through the rumour mill, and that is simply not what is open to me.

So the member and the rumour mill have a whole list of ideas of what might be happening. Mr. Chair, I am undertaking to find out. The executive director of Human Resources is with me this afternoon. We will find out exactly what Mr. Krockner is doing, where exactly he is employed, what projects or responsibilities are that he is undertaking. There is no effort to avoid the question, but

there is an effort to avoid adding to rumours which the member says are his source of his questioning.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not think anyone likes rumours. That is why I asked the minister a simple question that has taken several minutes. I asked the minister to explain and I will be going on to other issues here now, and we can return to this when Corrections comes up.

Would the minister explain, when I asked her in the Question Period why the government broke its promise of a quarter million dollars for Victims Assistance funding 1996 and '97, she responded by saying, that money went to the RCMP victims services units program. Why did she say that?

* (1610)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, this government funded a program for the RCMP to deal with victims, and there was a plan for that funding then to slowly be finished, because the commitment is not ongoing operational fundings from where that was funded and that the community or other funding sources would be found. There has been a question about how services to victims should be provided across the province, what kinds of services, how might those services be provided. So we as a government undertook to continue—and I believe this is the second year—the RCMP victims program which I believe is in the amount of \$225,000, so it is that amount that I assume the member was referring to.

In terms of additional funding, we do have a commitment to victims. We are undertaking a victims strategy. We have a victims study going on. We want to look at what the needs of victims are across the province, and with that information we will then be able to evaluate exactly how we support victims, how we can continue to support victims, and I am certainly looking for ways to continue to improve our support to victims.

Mr. Mackintosh: I asked the minister to explain on the record why in answer to my question she said the quarter million dollars went to the RCMP victims services unit, because the promise was made on April 13 that victims assistance funding will be increased by \$250,000 in the 1996-1997 fiscal year. That is an amount, not \$225,000. It is not a continuing program; it is new money. Why did the minister say it was going to the RCMP program?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, obviously I answered that because that I had understood to be the question. Though I had communicated with those communities involved, I know that there is always a desire for as much certainty as possible. So that is how I answered the question, as another way to provide certainty that that program is continuing for another year. The amount is about \$225,000.

In terms of additional funding or other funding that may come to victims, our government has made a commitment to do that. Our government has made that commitment, and the first step of that commitment is the study of victims' needs across this province.

Now, I do not know whether the member assumes that all of that election commitment would be spent in a single year, I do not know if that is what he believes is the case. However, my effort in answering him was to say yes, there is money being spent; yes, I can confirm we are supporting the RCMP victims program this year; yes, I can confirm to him that we are doing a study, and yes, this government did make an election commitment to enhance the position of victims, and we certainly will be doing that during the course of our term.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who I understand was the co-chair of the Conservative election campaign, tell this House whether she was in any way involved in putting together a press release of April 13, 1995, which stated: Court system to get tune-up, task force to make system more accessible, responsive: Filmon. Does she have any knowledge or recollection of that press release?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am assuming the press release the member is speaking about is one which relates to our plan to review the civil justice side of courts. Does the member have a question around that? Is there something that is unclear about what was said, or does he have a problem with that review?

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister recall in that press release that a promise was made for increased Victims Assistance funding for '96-97 in the amount of a quarter million dollars?

Mrs. Vodrey: If the member has it in front of him, I would ask that he table it. That certainly would be helpful to see what he is using as his reference point. He

may have something in front of him, and I would be interested to know that.

Mr. Mackintosh: I will do one better, and I will read it into the record, Mr. Chair. I will first ask the minister, does she have any recollection or knowledge that a promise was made for additional monies for Victims Assistance funding in the election campaign?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is our government's intention to continue to enhance the position of victims and to continue to bring victims back into the justice system. One of the ways in which we have made our continued commitment that way is in the continued funding this year of the RCMP program, and also in our position around a study for victims, study of victims services across the province. So that is our government's commitment. I believe that we are living up to that commitment. If the member has something in addition, then he might like to put it on the record.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister aware of any election promise being made about increased funding to the Victims Assistance Committee?

* (1620)

Mrs. Vodrey: I apologize for the slight delay. Let me introduce Mr. Les Kee to the committee, who is the Director of Special Prosecutions and Programs, since the area of services to victims falls within his direct area of responsibility.

Again, I come to the same answer to the member. The program for the RCMP victims programs was, in fact, funding which had expired, for lack of a better word. It was given for a certain length of time, and that funding was then to be gradually reduced while it was taken up by other sources within the funding agreement. That is a clause within the agreement. However, because issues were raised by the municipalities and by people within the province about what the services to victims should be, we decided that, rather than expiring and showing, if you like, that budget, that amount of money printed down, then we would make sure that was allowed for within the budget, that there was a clear commitment able to be seen by municipalities in terms of the funding for that program. That is what you do see within the budget for the Department of Justice in the victims area.

Mr. Chair, we are, as I have said, in the process of a victims study, and we are looking at what kinds of services to victims might be made available across the province, what the best way is to provide that service. As we are looking at that, we will see what comes out. That is in progress and I hope, when I have that, to be able to act on it. At that point, government will have to make a decision about anything further if we are able to act immediately upon what the results say.

I stand by the fact that this government has made good on its commitment again to fund. I believe it is for the second year, because I believe the project would have expired a year ago and we extended funding, and we have made a commitment to have that funding this year.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to be perfectly clear, then, the minister is saying that the money, the \$250,000 promised on April 13, 1995, in the press release, was for the RCMP victim services unit. Can she confirm my understanding for the record?

Mrs. Vodrey: The money was for victims, and the member laughs, more than they ever put forward, believe me, and we will get to that when we get to the details. I will be happy to, when we get to that line, talk about the tremendous increase in funding for victims by this government over what the NDP ever did, though they are trying mightily now to put forward a sensitivity. However, that money was for victims and victim services, and we this year chose to make sure that the RCMP program was continued. We are also doing a study of victims needs across the province.

Mr. Mackintosh: Was the \$250,000 promised on April 13 for the RCMP victim services unit?

Mrs. Vodrey: Very much, Mr. Chair, and as I have said at least three times before this, the program was a time-limited program. The time had expired. This year we have chosen to continue to use money to support that program, and at the same time we are doing a study of victims services and needs across the province, and at that point we will be able to develop a more comprehensive program. We will be looking to have that study yield us the best way to service victims across this province, and whether it involves enhancements or changes or changes in delivery method, I am not even going to begin to guess.

My answer has been the same to the best of my understanding—that is, where that money has been spent, and it is an extension of a program that would have expired and government chose to put their money into that program for another year.

Mr. Mackintosh: I thank that minister for the confirmation. I will now read that promise into the record. This is the press release of April 13, 1995. It says: In addition, the Premier said victims assistance funding will be increased by \$250,000 in the 1996-97 fiscal year. Victims programming will receive a boost this year partly as a result of tough new measures such as a sale of property confiscated in prostitution and drug cases. The Victims Assistance Committee will have the responsibility for determining how the additional resources will be put to work.

How can the minister reconcile the nonsense she put on the record in Question Period and again here today with what the press release said on April 13?

* (1630)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that I am told the Victims Assistance Committee in the very beginning approved this RCMP program and was supportive of this program. Not only were they supportive of the program and approved it for funding in its first type of funding which has now expired, but municipalities were also supportive of that. If the member is not, if the member has some other ideas, perhaps he would want to put that forward.

Then, in terms of money which would flow from the proceeds of crime, I am informed that at the moment we are in negotiations with the federal government regarding the splitting of money which would come from the proceeds of crime. We are developing a Memorandum of Understanding, but for us, we want to be clear that we, as a province, have the discretion to spend those dollars where we believe they should be spent and that is in the area of victims.

Mr. Chair, the federal government, in working out this negotiation, may have different priorities than we do. So, at the moment, this issue is under negotiation. Manitoba's position is that money which will flow from the proceeds of crime that will be reached through this

Memorandum of Understanding, for us the priority is in the area of victims; but that Memorandum of Understanding is not concluded at this time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Will the minister confirm that the Victims Assistance Committee this year has not received an additional quarter million dollars as promised?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the money promised to the Victims Assistance Committee is money promised to victims—[interjection] The member laughs. It is money to be made available to victims.

Mr. Chair, what we have done is, we have continued for another year, for I believe a second year, almost a second year, a particular program which had the support of the Victims Assistance Committee when it started, when the project started, which we have continued to support. We are in the process now of doing a victims study. Following that, we will have, I believe, further information on which to make decisions. Then, as I have said, monies from proceeds of crime, I have explained that monies from proceeds of crime is still under negotiations with the federal government, that it is still our commitment that our share of those dollars will in fact be spent for victims. The federal government may have another idea, and that is why we want to have the discretion to spend that money ourselves in the area of victims.

Mr. Mackintosh: Will the minister explain what the tough new measures are on the sale of property confiscated in prostitution and drug cases? What tough new measures are there that were announced?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have asked the federal Minister of Justice to look at amending the Criminal Code to allow for the forfeiture of vehicles for those who have been users in prostitution. I have written him a letter and I have not received an answer back yet from the federal government. That, however, would be a practice, if adopted through the federal Criminal Code, which in fact is a position on tough new measures regarding prostitution.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute recess? The committee will recess for five minutes.

The committee recessed at 4:38 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:49 p.m.

Mr. Mackintosh: So is the minister confirming now that there certainly were no tough new measures such as the sale of property confiscated in prostitution and drug cases, that it was simply some hope that some negotiations would begin with the federal government and some changes might happen? Is that what she is saying now?

Mrs. Vodrey: This is one measure which does require the federal government to assist us, so we have asked for that assistance. We think it would be very helpful. I know the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) also has an initiative which she is bringing forward, so government is attempting to deal with this in a comprehensive way. I believe that we have made ourselves clear on where we stand in the matter of prostitution, particularly where it involves young women. We have asked the federal government in the past, as well, to extend sentences for those who are procurers, for those who bring young women into a life of prostitution because that, in fact, can ruin their lives.

* (1650)

So we have looked at it from a sentencing point of view which does require the federal government and have acted on our request to the federal government. We have also requested the federal government assist us in the area of forfeiture of vehicles, and as I can say, and the Minister of Family Services should speak for her initiatives, but they are part of our government's initiatives to deal with prostitution and particularly focus on prostitution where very young women are involved because we recognize this as really something which can ruin their lives.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister tell us of just one new measure she has responsibility for that has been brought in regarding the sale of property confiscated in prostitution and drug cases? I want to know what this press release is talking about.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I know the member is aware that the federal government is in charge of the Criminal Code, and that we are in charge of the administration of justice. So, in fact, in bringing forward some of our initiatives, initiatives which originate from the government of Manitoba, we do require the participation of the federal government to assist us.

Here are some of the things which we have put forward. Number one was a letter to Allan Rock more than a year ago dealing with sentencing in the area of procurers of prostitution; and then a letter to Allan Rock to assist us in the seizure and forfeiture of vehicles for those who are users of prostitutes. Thirdly, we would like to have the ability to use some of the proceeds of crime dollars on behalf of victims, and some of that may flow towards prostitution. At the moment, the federal government with this new legislation is proceeding fairly slowly, and so we are negotiating the MOU with them, but to date it is not complete.

Finally, Mr. Chair, Bill 35, which is before the House now—I know the member has it sitting on his desk—and which was brought forward by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), deals with the use of the Child Abuse Registry to name those individuals who use young women as prostitutes, to be named to the Child Abuse Registry. It also deals with pimps, those people who act as procurers.

Mr. Chair, we ask one thing of members opposite. We ask them to pass this bill before the end of June. We ask them to come forward and take decisive action—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to remind all honourable members that we should not be referring or pre-empting any debate on a bill that is before the House at this time. That would be out of order at this time.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, certainly I do not want to preclude any debate. May I just ask the Chair, however, if it is in order to speak about our desire to have swift passage of that bill, which will require the agreement of members opposite?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. In the question that the minister poses, there is anticipation of the bill being

brought forward for debate. It is the anticipation which is not allowed under our rules of such a bill. So I have to ask the honourable minister not to refer to or explain the bill or get into the bill as a whole.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. Vodrey: Then I wonder if this is in order, that it is the fervent hope of this government that members opposite will consider the bill seriously and look for speedy passage. Without anticipating any debate, I can simply say that there was a commitment by this government to deal with certain matters that would express our concern for young people used in prostitution. But, of course, to act on that quickly, we would hope that members opposite would be in agreement, and would be supportive of swift and speedy passage whenever such a bill might come forward.

* (1700)

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister has done another disservice to legislators in general because this promise, the \$250,000 this year, 1996-97, for expenditure through the Victims Assistance Committee is a promise that has been broken. The minister can do all the dancing she wants. To put in the press release, the statement that the programming will receive a boost this year, partly as a result of tough new measures such as the sale of property confiscated in prostitution and drug cases, has not been backed up by this minister whatsoever. She has talked about some change in the formula for the proceeds of crime. She has not talked about what tough new measures there are, about confiscation. This is just another broken election promise. It is another fudge to the people. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) made a statement, made a promise, and unique. It was a promise, specific, not only in amount, but with regard to the fiscal year, with regard to how the revenues would be raised and who was to decide on how the money was spent.

It is just one more example of how the talk from this government is not backed up by the action. It is scandalous. What is even worse is that the minister then engages in misleading the public of Manitoba, misleading people in this room, particularly misleading victims by saying that this money was going to the RCMP victims services units. She knows darn well that that was untrue. The victims services unit money was

granted in March. It was for a different amount, \$225,000, and was not an amount to be raised from confiscation nor to be expended through the Victims Assistance Committee.

So when the member goes around with the puffery about how she is concerned about victims in this province, we know what goes on here. She will make a statement or the Premier will make a statement about how victims are important and then you see what happens when the minister gets her hands on the issue.

She even has the nerve to go off to Ottawa and talk about a national victims strategy. Here at home she is breaking an election promise, a specific one. Here at home, of course, she has been cutting grants under her tenure to the Victims Assistance Committee. In fact, our calculation is, it is a whopping 43 percent cut in the amounts going to the Victims Assistance grants, and that is in just four years. Of course, victims assistance generally got the biggest single service cut in her whole department. I would hope that the minister would learn from what has been—how her statements have damaged the office that she occupies temporarily, as any Attorney General does, and how there must be a different standard for Attorneys General than other ministers, because Attorneys General are there to uphold the law, and there must be confidence in that office.

But for her to come back, instead of saying simply, we decided to change our minds, we broke our promise and we will take the heat, she comes back and says, oh, no, that was some other funding, that was something else, I think that is even worse, Mr. Chairperson, than just coming clean. I hope that she would have done the right thing today and said that she was wrong, she misled the House earlier and that this money now will not be granted to the Victims Assistance Committee.

But, oh, no, she went on and on and tried to make it look like this was money for the RCMP program. It is very sad and unfortunately reflects not only on her but all the good people that occupied that office in the past and reflects on the integrity of that office.

It is my intention to move through Executive Support now. I have one question. I understand Wyman Sangster, formerly of the RCMP, has now been hired in

the Justice Department, and I just wonder what role that individual is performing in Justice.

Mrs. Vodrey: I will take a moment to speak about a standard of behaviour from the Attorney General, a standard of behaviour that I can tell the member I take very, very seriously, have acted upon according to my oath, and a standard of behaviour in which he constantly seeks to change.

Mr. Chair, I have to reflect on the role of the opposition in speaking about the role of the Attorney General because I fully understand our parliamentary system and the importance of an opposition, the importance of an opposition to raise on behalf of people questions and to have issues raised. But the integrity of the opposition and the member from St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) is called into question when he constantly tries to diminish the role of the Attorney General, tries to continually, even though explanations have been offered that cases cannot be spoken about because they are before the court, certain issues cannot be discussed because those points must be made in court, then the member of the opposition, the member from St. Johns, decides that the standard of behaviour for the Attorney General should apply except when he is asking the questions. When he is asking the questions, there should not be that standard applied, but, in fact, all information, totally inappropriately, should be provided. In fact, he comes, as I have said, dangerously close to the line time after time after time in information that he gives out which brings him very, very close, in the opinion of many, to contempt of court.

So, in talking about the standard and the integrity of the office of the Attorney General, I for one accept that it is a very important standard and a very important office, and the office of Attorney General is different from that of any other cabinet minister because the Attorney General does not accept any political direction or political advice. The decisions of the Attorney General must be made separate and are. But, Mr. Chair, the member opposite for his political point of view, for his political gain, always tries to influence the Attorney General, always tries to come forward and get information brought forward that should not be spoken about outside of court, and always tries for his political agenda to influence that very special role.

I have patiently, over the time of my tenure, explained to the member across the way why certain issues cannot be spoken about because of the special office that I hold. It is one, however, that he appears to have never understood, ever, and that makes me fearful because in the role as someone in opposition with supposedly an important function to serve on behalf of the people of Manitoba, we have a member opposite who has no understanding of that, and who, for political reasons, constantly tries to diminish and attack that role.

So, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to make sure that it was put on the record by me, in the position I occupy as Attorney General, the very important role that I hold and how it is that I fulfill that role, working with many members of the opposition on issues which they bring forward, but the member from St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has had the most difficulty understanding that role.

Now, Mr. Chair, in terms of the funding to the Victims Assistance program, I have explained very patiently over a significant amount of time the details of the amount of money which is, in fact, going to victims, the \$225,000 to the RCMP program approved by the Victims Assistance Committee, the memorandum of understanding which we are engaging in with the federal government to deal with the proceeds of crime, our efforts to work with the federal government on the forfeiture of vehicles which would provide us with additional funding, so there are significant ways in which I have patiently explained to the member across the way who is almost acting in a childlike fashion and is clinging on—[interjection]

* (1710)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I really hate to interrupt the minister, but—[interjection] Order, please. We have been doing fine till now. The honourable minister has the floor at this time, if we could give the courtesy to let the minister finish her statement.

Mrs. Vodrey: The member has also made allegations about a percentage amount of change which he has arrived at. When we get to that exact line, I will be happy to compare for him the amount of money spent by this government on victims' services and the amount of

money spent by the former NDP government. Believe me, Mr. Chair, it is a significant difference in that this government's commitment financially is significantly greater than the NDP ever made or ever thought of making or ever will make.

He should be very clear, when he comes to be critical, about what his own party did and their lack of commitment. It is this government which has been focusing on issues of concern to victims, not only through the funding of programming, some of which was never funded by members opposite when they were in government, and also a concerted strategy to take the best of programming for victims, the best of ways to deal with victims across this country and put it together in a national strategy, and the fact is it was this government, the government of Manitoba on behalf of the people of Manitoba, which took that forward to Ottawa and had it accepted by ministers across the country, and that is fulfilling a commitment to the people of Manitoba, as well.

So the member opposite is very selective in the kinds of things that he brings. He tries to concoct a case, but the facts, Mr. Chair, have been different time and time again.

Now, in terms of the specific question about another individual personnel matter, Wyman Sangster who has joined the Department of Justice, he comes with two specific tasks, one, to work with the community around Manitoba in areas of crime prevention programs, to attend with communities and to help them develop at the grassroots level ways that they can participate and also to work in support of victims' programs.

At the moment, as I explained, we are doing a study of victims' services, and then he will be the lead individual to look at how we will be developing our victims' services across the province, and we certainly look for that to provide an enhancement.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed. Item 4.1.(b) Executive Support (2) Other Expenditures \$81,000—pass.

Item 4.1.(c) Policy, Planning and Special Projects (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$255,200.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just going back over the Estimates in earlier times, I noticed that it was usual to ask for a list of the projects that were ongoing in this area. Can the minister provide, either in writing or orally today, a list of the projects that are being studied?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I can give the member some of the initiatives which are being pursued and will commit to table a list tomorrow, a more complete list, of the projects being undertaken by Policy and Planning.

But just to give a little bit of information today, first of all, they are taking part in the case management pilot project through Family Law. I think that is an important one. They are also participants on the steering committee for parent education which is being done through family conciliation. They are responsible for analysis of all juror stat reports. They are taking the lead to co-ordinate the Law Reform Commission report on professions and occupations review. Those are some of the initiatives which I think are, perhaps, of specific interest to the community, and I will table a full list tomorrow.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): A point of order. I am just wondering, when things are asked for by the official opposition Justice critic, if I could assume that the minister would also table those for the Liberal Justice critic.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point or order, but if the minister does table any documents we will see that the member gets a copy of it.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, though that was not a point of order in your ruling, I just think it is important to put on the record that, yes, I am certainly willing to provide that information to the Liberal Justice critic.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the minister put in place some kind of a comprehensive follow-up to all the election promises made on crime in the last election?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, each division is responsible for the pursuing of election promises which would fall within that division, and certainly I ask for accountability that we are able to have fulfilled or are moving in the

direction of fulfilling our election promises. As the member knows, some of those promises do require co-operation of others, including the federal government very specifically, and so that is another part of the communication that we have to do in terms of dealing with our election promises.

Mr. Mackintosh: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The item is accordingly passed.
4.1.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$153,400—pass.

4.1.(d) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$791,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$270,700—pass.

4.1.(e) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$600,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$136,500.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister give the committee information on the number of aboriginal peoples employed in the department with a breakdown by division?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed the percentage is 6.28 percent of aboriginal people within the Department of Justice. I am told that we do not have that broken down by division today, but we can get that broken down by division and we will provide it to the member.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 4.1.(e) (2) Other Expenditures—pass.

4.1.(f) Computer Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,600.

* (1720)

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that the common offence notice system is not operating as it should and that for approximately the last year or so, the computer system has not been able to let the licensing branch know when individuals are in arrears on their fines so that licences are not renewed or issued to people that are in arrears. Would the minister explain why this deficiency exists, and what steps are being taken to ensure that the courts let the licensing branch know about this important matter?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the details of the member's comments would best be discussed under 5.(b) in which this will be dealt with in Courts division.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 4.1.(f) Computer Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits—pass. (2) Other Expenditures \$403,700—pass.

We will move on to Resolution 4.2. Public Prosecutions (a) Public Prosecutions (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,840,800.

Did you get that on the record? Where did I stop? I am just going to back up to (f) Computer Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$403,700—pass.

Resolution 4.2. Public Prosecutions (a) Public Prosecutions (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,840,800.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would like to go back to the first Hughes report of September 1991 in regard to the procedures following the investigation and subsequent stay in the matter of Harvey Pollock.

In that report, Mr. Hughes had made a number of recommendations, and I ask the minister if she would tell the committee what recommendations there have been acted on and which are still outstanding.

Mrs. Vodrey: As the member said, that was a 1991 report. We do have a new assistant deputy minister, and so we will undertake to get that information in terms of the changes made since that report. If the member has a specific question, I will be happy to take that, as well.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, is the minister herself aware as to the status of those recommendations and their implementation today?

Mrs. Vodrey: As the member knows, this was a very lengthy and comprehensive report. There were a number of recommendations. Some of those recommendations, I understand, were directed to the police, some to us in the Department of Justice, and we have, I understand, reorganized to ensure the independent assessment of cases.

However, to provide more detailed information, I would like to undertake to get that information for the member and to provide it to him.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the minister now revisited the issue of the Crown or departmental indemnification for individuals who have to proceed with private

prosecutions because the department has refused to prosecute, and where have those prosecutions been successful?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told and as the member knows, I am sure, in deciding whether to prosecute, the department does apply a test. This test is applied uniformly, and sometimes that test results in the fact that the department determines not to go ahead. Charges are laid by the police as the member knows, and then the department has to apply their test in terms of proceeding to a prosecution.

At this time, there is not a consideration to provide an indemnification for an individual who decides to proceed with a private prosecution. There has not been that consideration at this time.

Mr. Mackintosh: I ask why that consideration has not been made, given that it is her department's decision not to prosecute that led to often substantial cost to an individual and where the matter is proved beyond a reasonable doubt. Surely, if we are to uphold justice, that should be given consideration at least.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, the answer is the same. At the moment, we are not looking at an indemnification. Where a person decides to bring a case of a private prosecution, they do bear the costs.

Just in a quick discussion, it is my understanding that there is not this indemnification in other parts of Canada, and, in fact, in some other parts of Canada, private prosecutions are not allowed.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 5:30 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 27, 1996

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