

TIME: 8:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
ESTIMATES — HIGHWAYS

MR. CHAIRMAN, Mr. D. James Walding (St. Vital): Order please. We have a quorum, gentlemen. The Committee will come to order. I would refer the attention of honourable members to Page 37 in their Estimates Book. Resolution 71. Construction of Provincial Trunk Highways, Provincial Roads and Related Projects. The Honourable Member for Swan River.

MR. BILTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we shut down at the supper hour, Mr. Chairman, I was speaking of the road from No. 10 to Pelican Rapids and it's a matter that's very very close to my heart and has been for a long time and as I said at that time, I wasn't going to thresh old straw and the Minister took the occasion as we were walking down the hall to mention to me that the matter had been discussed last night to a large degree and that I appreciate and I thank my colleague for bringing it to the attention of the Committee. But last night, Mr. Chairman, we were talking about maintenance; I'm talking about construction. That road has been crying out loud for attention for a good many years and it may be called a bush road and it may be classified as a bush road but I suggest to you that that community is not getting any smaller. The province has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in the building of school accommodation for the young people there. It's a spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in community housing. It's a community that is there to stay and the sooner this government or the Federal Government or both together realize that they have a responsibility to give those people at least security and safety on that twenty miles on Highway No. 10, the better it's going to be.

I listened to the figures that the Minister gave out a little earlier — or at least before the supper hour — and I noticed with some surprise, I'm not going to question the figures, but I noticed with some surprise, that our district, the district which I represent, was the smallest throughout the province. Obviously that means less expenditure on our highway system.

Now, Mr. Chairman, to go away from that if I may, in that particular area Mafeking into Pelican Rapids, up to Barrows and Westgate, I suggest to the Minister that there is no way he is accommodating that area with the equipment that he has got in there. The men do their level best with what they have, and it is not enough and it's what, forty-five, fifty-five miles from your yard in Swan River, and it's a neglected area, brings me to Highway No. 277, and the Minister has been prevailed upon — I wrote him last December and I am not going to quote that letter to you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, he's had it, he's gone over it, and I thought that together with the attachments by people throughout that area, Mafeking, Birch River and Swan River supported what I had to say or I supported what they had to say, and I was amazed to find that highway construction program for Manitoba did not include in any way, any shape or form whatsoever, any expenditure for the upgrading of Highway 277. That is not a provincial road, Mr. Chairman, that is a recognized highway on the map, and what have we got, what have we got, a dirt road half of the time. People up and down that road all the way to the Saskatchewan border and the Minister knows this, I don't have to tell him. . .

A MEMBER: . . . The third Trans Canada Highway, isn't it?

MR. BILTON: It could be. In my humble opinion it should be the highway that belongs to the Yellowhead, and as I pointed out in my letter last December to the Minister that there were arrangements years ago when this province punched through that highway to serve those people, and on to Hudson Bay Junction, that the Saskatchewan Government from the Manitoba provincial border, proposed to put in black top all the way and they did, and what did we do. And, Mr. Minister, the traffic down that road — I don't know if we have a traffic count or not to embarrass me, you may have, but I doubt it very much because you haven't paid that much attention to that particular area.

In the beginning a wonderful road was built and every spring and for a large part of the spring it is almost impassable. School buses are used, a great deal of timber is hauled out of that country, and it's the access to Saskatchewan in that particular area into Hudson Bay Junction and thousands of tourists come through there, and the Minister has totally ignored, totally ignored the appeal of the people that gave him the information in good enough time. And this just didn't happen this year, Mr. Minister. Almost from the day you went into office, and prior to that if I may say so, you have been asked to do something about that road, and I would be remiss if I didn't emphasize with everything that's within me, on behalf of the people along that road and the four or five or six communities, to appeal to you on their behalf to reconsider your Estimates and do something to bring that road up to reasonable standards to satisfy those people. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Honourable Member for Gladstone.

MR. FERGUSON: . . . off, Mr. Chairman' was that before the supper hour? It's okay, carry on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

MR. ADAM: Yes, I just was going to pass but I had one question to ask the Minister before the supper hour in answer to a question that we asked yesterday. The Minister indicated that the East Waterhen Road was a responsibility of the province, I'm just wondering why it is not shown on the map?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTNIAK: Mr. Chairman, there is no number on it, as I understand it is just a main market road in the local government district. There is no number on it, it's not a PR but as far as the jurisdiction is concerned with the maintenance and the likes, it falls under provincial authority.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage La Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, under this item, it relates to some questions I inquired of the various Ministers in the House last week, and that is: what steps does the Department of Highways take when they are constructing new roads where they consider the environmental impact on the particular area? I can suggest to you two areas where I have a little bit of concern: one is that a few years ago a change in the road was made through the Delta Marshes to Delta, and while we appreciate in that area having a decent road, there was a good road bed there but a change was made, linked together with the fact that the Portage diversion caused a change in the flow in the Delta Marshes. What I would like to know before your department undertakes any particular construction, what consideration is given to the habitat, the wildlife, the people who live along the routes, and so on.

The other case which I feel I was badly misrepresented by the Minister of Northern Affairs when I enquired about what had been done about studying the environmental impact with relation to the proposed road between The Pas and Moose Lake, which we all know is heavily financed by the Federal Government under the Northlands Agreement. So I would like to know if the Minister could tell us what his department does when the new construction is proposed, relating to the problems that I have just mentioned.

MR. BURTNIAK: Well' Mr. Chairman, usually where the environmental impact studies are carried out, in the reference made by the Member for Portage, in that particular area, we do liaise with the Department of Mines and Natural Resources. Through that department, certain studies are made and certain information is given, through the Department of Mines and Resources.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Well, excuse me . . .

MR. BILTON: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Does the honourable member have a point of order?

MR. BILTON: Yes, I do, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the point of order?

MR. BILTON: With all due respect to the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, I put questions to the Minister, and he chose to answer his questions first. Why are my questions not being answered?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't believe that is a point of order. The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, in order to resolve this, if the Minister would answer the Member for Swan River, I yield.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTNIAK: Mr. Chairman, if the Honourable Member for Swan River is anxious about an answer' I was not ignoring his points that he made. I was going to deal with the answers to the questions that the member posed later on, before we leave this item and move on to the Motor Vehicle Branch. However, the honourable member was talking, first of all, about the road to Pelican Rapids, and I appreciate his comments on that. We did deal with that item last night, in the absence of the honourable member because of his being in the other committee, I presume. That was quite fully discussed, I think. I gave my views and my opinions on that particular situation.

In regard to 277, I believe it is, the member was quite proud to say that that road was punched through, an excellent road. If it was an excellent road, I don't know what the honourable member wants us to do now. It's a gravel road, as the member said, and there are several other areas in the province that we would like to perhaps move in and construct or reconstruct some of these roads. We get requests from time to time in various areas. East of Lake Winnipeg, we have requests for that area, and a few others. You just can't do these things. You have to set your priorities and the priorities have been set. Somebody has to be left out.

Personally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to see all roads paved in the province of Manitoba' just like the Honourable Member for Swan River. But he knows damn well, as well as I do, we can't afford to do that. And what we try to do is to service the people to the best of our ability over the past years' as the members in opposition tried to do when they were the government. And I can remind my honourable friend, when he talks about 277, I can tell him a story about No. 20. When I was not in this House, a main road leading from Dauphin on to No. 10 to Cowan, when you want to talk about a Burma road, Mr. Chairman, that was the Burma road of the worst kind, where tractors were stuck during the term

of office of the Conservative Government. I was not a member of the government at the time. I was not a member of the Legislature. But for years we tried, I travelled that road every day, and we had busted tires and radiators and all that, and you know when it was done? When I came to this office and I finally got the road for them, which was definitely needed. I think that was a much more important road, and far be it from me to knock this road down and say, "It's not important". But I can tell my honourable friend that No. 20 was a heck of a lot more travelled and connected more areas than 277.

It took us many, many years before we were able to do it. You people, when you were in government, wouldn't even pay any attention to us when we asked and then demanded that something be done. Therefore, as I say, when we set our priorities every year, if we see that money is available and our priorities allow us to fix those roads or the road that the member is saying was 277, we will do so. But until such time as we feel that it's perhaps not in the highest priority for this particular year, we have a three year program now, as I was telling the honourable members last night. If it's not in the program this year, it may be next year or the following year. But this year we're not able to put it in the program. That doesn't mean that we're not ever going to do anything about it. But our priorities have indicated that we were not able to do that particular road, or do anything to it, like the Pelican Rapids or any other roads.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. BILTON: No, no' Mr. Chairman, surely you're going to give me the opportunity to reply to what the Minister has said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order please. All members will be given the opportunity to have their say on this particular item. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. BLAKE: On the same point of order . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was no point of order. Does the Honourable Member for Minnedosa have one?

MR. BLAKE: Yes, on a point of order, it would appear in a meeting we had with Public Utilities a week ago, that when we were on one particular topic, the feeling was that we should finish that particular topic, and we are dealing with a particular road now. I'm sure when the Member for Swan River has his say and the Minister replies, if he wishes, that will be the end of that particular topic, and won't have to belabour it any further, and then we can move on to the Member for Portage's question and get rid of those.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is usually the way that things are handled, when the Minister replies directly to a member, that the Chair then recognizes the member again. However' we had got away from that, and the Chair had recognized the Member for Portage la Prairie. The Chair will allow the Member for Portage la Prairie to ask his questions and then go back to the Member for Swan River. The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, I would like some clarification with respect to the road that is being built under the Northlands Agreement from The Pas to Moose Lake. I understand that the funding is mainly from the Government of Canada through the Northlands Agreement.

Well, if the members who are muttering so much want the floor, I'll give it to them, but I was allowed . . . — (Interjection) —

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. BILTON: I've never heard anything like it in all my life.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Okay, take the floor. Go ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Would honourable members direct their remarks to the Chair and not to each other.

MR. MCKENZIE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Roblin on a point of order.

MR. MCKENZIE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, I find it very difficult to understand why the rules have been changed tonight in this committee. Up until tonight, any member of the committee that raised a question, the Minister replied to that particular member, and then when that debate was over, we moved on. For some unforeseen reason tonight, the rules are changed, and I think there's been three members question the Minister — and I have no quarrel with that — and the Minister will reply. But why have the rules been changed? Does the Minister now want us to lump a whole bunch of questions together? If that's the way he wants them, that's fair ball. But up until tonight, Mr. Chairman, it's been a debate. Whoever questioned the Chair, the reply went on, and we solved that item and then moved on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, I don't think the rules have been changed. The honourable member interrupted the Member for Portage, and demanded a reply from the Minister, and as far as the Minister is concerned, he gave that reply, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Chair is not aware that the rules have been changed. The

Minister can choose to reply or choose not to reply at any time. The Honourable Member for Swan River.

MR. BILTON: Mr. Chairman, I came to this committee with something in my hand that has been the plague of my life for seven years, and I've done my utmost on behalf of those people. I came here sincerely and honestly, with the thought of trying to do something for the people I represent in that particular area, which is my "no man's land". And what did I get from the Minister? Nothing but arrogance. He as much as told me that I made the comment that "an excellent road has been punched through in that area", and I said that in general terms. He grasped that and endeavoured to ridicule what I was endeavouring to say and do on behalf of those people. He knows, Mr. Chairman, as well as I do, down through the years those people have been punished with their automobiles, their vehicles, and everything that's travelled over that road in certain seasons of the year. And he and his officials and his department are capable of remedying that and that's all I endeavoured to say. I notice with a great deal of interest that as far as his own constituency is concerned, if I dare to get personal as he did with me in a most irrational way because he happens to sit in the driver's seat, that Dauphin is going short of nothing and up in my particular territory Indian people, who also pay taxes, poor people whose children are traversed from one point to another over this dastardly road at certain times of the year, all I was endeavouring to do was to ask him to improve that condition.

He mentioned that a discussion went on last night about the Pelican Rapids road. He refused, he refused to acquaint me, the local member, with just an iota of what was discussed last night and unfortunately, the way our rules are these days, that we have two committees going on at the one time and I happen to have interests in that committee in the other House and unfortunately couldn't be here. But he wouldn't do me the courtesy of mentioning something which is important to me in that area. I'm going away from this meeting tonight, Mr. Chairman, and I can't assure those people that that 20 miles is going to be snowplowed, never mind graded. And he could care less, he could care less. All he did was talk to me in an arrogant way as though he rules the roost. Mr. Minister, you are the servant of the people of this province in the matter of the Minister of Highways and what my needs are in my particular constituency are just as important as yours. And in this particular instance, Mr. Minister . . . here's the letter, I can read it into the records, Mr. Chairman, if necessary, as to how desperate that situation is and he chose to speak to me the way he spoke to me tonight and I don't accept it because I'll tell you Mr. Minister, come this election you send your cohorts up into that area as you did in the last election and won every poll — you're not going to win them this time, not the way you talk tonight because those people are expecting a great deal more of you. They've expected a great deal more of you from the day you were elected, or your party was elected and you've let them down for seven years and you don't realize it and don't think they're not going to get the words that you said tonight on their behalf.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to have disturbed this meeting tonight, but I feel very very strongly about this matter and those people that are suffering in the meantime and here we have nothing but an arrogant Minister of Highways that could care less, but put a million and a half into the Dauphin constituency. Go to it. Have a good time. I've said my piece.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I think that since the member referred to the Pelican Rapid road, I didn't think that . . . As we have done in the past we have such a thing as Hansard and if the honourable member was not here for the discussion yesterday and we had a good discussion, he certainly can find it in Hansard like we do when the members are not in the House during the question period or whatever. Hansard is published as quickly as possible and the member can certainly read the questions and the answers and the discussion that took place in Hansard tomorrow or the day after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, the discussion did become rather wide-ranging and I would like to remind my friend, the Member for Swan River, that the two committee system was put into effect with the complete co-operation of his party.

MR. BILTON: That's right and I am not complaining.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: The second thing I would like to remind the member of is the fact that in the days when — and he and I were elected together — in those days his government had no hesitation whatsoever in closing down a committee or refusing to call a committee if it didn't suit their purposes and he knows that's a matter of historical record. I'm not a proponent of this government but they have been more open in committee than any other government before.

The third thing I'd like to remind my friend of before I start my remarks, that on numerous occasions as a member of the opposition representing the constituency of Portage la Prairie, I called various government departments many times and many times I was told by civil servants that I had to speak to the Minister. They were told not to give me the information and I want to remind the Honourable Member for Swan River that's the way it was before 1969. —(Interjection)—

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: I'm going into business if the honourable member wants to know, I'm going

into business and I'm going to enjoy myself. — (Interjection)— No, I think it's big business.

Now, if I can return to the Minister. I'm not quite satisfied with his reply. First of all, I think that if a highway or a road is constructed under the Northlands Agreement, that the province, namely through his department, should have control. It shouldn't be given to another Minister. Another Minister shouldn't issue statements that are really speaking for the policy of the Highways Department and I feel very strongly about this. If a highway is being constructed largely with Federal funds, it's still a provincial responsibility. —(Interjection)—

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: It's still a provincial responsibility because an agreement was made, the funds were supplied and the province was given the responsibility.

Now I have one other question and then perhaps the Minister can take them and answer them and allow other members to take part in the discussion. I note under Construction of Provincial Trunk Highways and Roads that it states and I quote: "Provides for the construction of a highway system at a standard that is acceptable to the travelling public, that services existing and new industries, resources and tourism at the highest level of safety within existing economic resources." Now I would like the Minister to tell me if his government and his department are going along with the request of the Federal Government to reduce the speed limits in the province and this relates to the construction of highways, curbs' grades and so on?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: Yes, Mr. . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: If I can complete. The province of Ontario and I believe two other provinces have moved in the direction of reducing the speed limit. Could the Minister inform the committee what the government's intentions are in this regard?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: I'd be glad to, Mr. Chairman, if I can take the last things first. The last question that the member asked was what the province of Manitoba is doing or is proposing to do with regard to speed limits on our highways. We made the statements I did as Minister of Highways and the Premier as well — some time ago, that we all agreed, all the provinces agreed to go metric by 1977 and as far as highway signs are concerned, by September 1977, that means this coming September. Now, to reduce the speed limits in the provincial highways earlier within — when I say earlier I'm talking about the last year or two — I felt would be a waste of money in the changing of signs since we are going metric. So we said that if and when we do go metric there we are hoping to reduce the speed limit somewhat. We have kept that promise and we are going to be reducing the speed limits on our Manitoba highways to some degree when the new signs go up and I gave the speed limits in kilometres. Where we have a 70 mile an hour speed limit on our four-lane roads, that will be reduced to 100 kilometres or 62.14 miles per hour. Where we have speed limits presently in existence of 60 or 65 miles per hour, they will become 90 kilometres per hour or 55.92 miles per hour and of course there will be some speed limits where we have . . . around the interchanges and lights, they'll probably be about 40 kilometres or 20 some miles, 25 miles per hour or something like that, somewhere in the neighbourhood, but basically those are the three main speeds. So there is a reduction of about eight miles per hour on the four-lane highways and four and nine . . . when you take 60 and 65 reducing it down to 90 kilometres an hour there will be a difference of four miles on the 60 and nine miles on the 65 miles per hour when you bring it to 90 kilometres per hour. So that we believe will come into effect, as we see it now, in September of this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: About the matter of the travelling public who have older cars and they don't have any kilometre reading, are you going to post the new speed limits in the miles per hour for a year or so?

MR. BURTONIAK: No, I don't think that would be a good idea. The other provinces will not be doing that either because I think it would cause a lot of confusion by the motoring public. We hope to go into some fairly intensive publicity and, in that manner, we hope that the general public will be able to accommodate or be able to understand and be able to convert into the kilometres instead of miles per hour. But to do it as the honourable member suggests, having it both in the metric and the other would be very confusing I would think and therefore, we're not suggesting that and we discussed it with other provinces and no other province is doing that either.

I might point out, Mr. Chairman, although this has nothing to do with the speed limits but, what we have done in the last, I believe it's almost two years now, we did put up dual signing dealing with the destination signs, as the honourable member knows, in several locations around the province in larger centres, where we indicate distances from point A to point B in both miles and kilometres. That's in both. But when it comes down to the speed limits, that is a little dangerous. — (Interjection)—

Yes, I'm advised that just lately we were informed that the automobile manufacturers will have available. I suppose for purchase, a decal for those cars which are the older models, which do not have the kilometres per hour on their speedometers, but you can, I guess you can install them in some way or paste them, or glue them on or whatever, just for the benefit of the travelling public.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Well, the Minister hasn't come to my original question about highways built under the Northlands Agreement, who has control, who constructs them, who decides the route they take, who decides whether or not it should go through a wildlife refuge and so on.

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, in the case of western Northlands Agreement, I might say that the Department of Highways does not have all that much involvement as a department. What we are asked to do, perhaps when there is a new road being punched through is to put a line through. Then, of course, when dealing with the environment, the Department of Mines and Resources, that is their jurisdiction and although we may have some input in the construction of the road, it is strictly — I would think I would be safe in saying — sort of at length situation really because, in this case, it is either the Northern Affairs or the Department of Renewable Resources that has the full responsibility of that kind of road construction. We may, as I say, go in and do certain things like surveys and the likes of that, but not actual construction as such.

I don't know if that helps the honourable member or not, whether it answers the question, but what I'm really trying to say is, to put it very plainly or very bluntly, when we talk about the western northland, that really is not . . . We at the Department of Highways are not that much involved with Western Northland, not to the same degree as we are with the highway strengthening, for example, which is strictly from the Department of Highways and the Federal Government whereas in these other cases it's either Northern Affairs or the Department of Renewable Resources.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, I'm not satisfied with whatever arrangement the Minister has made. I think it's quite a strange departure where in all other areas of the province the Department of Highways has control over standards, over routes taken, over land acquisition — (Interjection) —

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. JOHNSTON: . . . and I find it very strange that the Minister of Highways would give up responsibilities even though it is a federal-provincial agreement that is favourable to the province and surely that the Minister should be as one with the Minister of Northern Affairs in this regard. The Minister of Northern Affairs, in my opinion, has a different approach and he's demonstrated that — has a different approach completely to the approach that should be taken by a department such as yours, that is to construct roads in the safest manner possible, the best routes possible and to serve the most people possible and I find it very strange that two departments of the Provincial Government are operating, as the Minister just said, at arms length, where the Minister of Highways doesn't really know what the Minister who signed and concluded the Northlands Agreement . . . I find that very strange.

MR. BURTONIAK: It may seem strange, Mr. Chairman, but I want to assure the honourable member that it wasn't the Minister of Highways that suggested such an arrangement, but regardless, it was a policy decision made by Cabinet that the northern roads will fall under the Minister of Northern Affairs, which roads are not built to the same standards as what the Department of Highways builds. Most of these roads are winter roads. I guess one could say that to some degree many of these are below-standard roads; perhaps some day in the future they may become PRs, but at the moment they are there for the simple reason that we like to link up the various isolated communities which do fall under the Department of Northern Affairs, and that was the decision made by this government, not necessarily by the Minister himself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. G. JOHNSTON: I yield the floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Rock Lake.

MR. HENRY J. EINARSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to pose a question first of all to the Minister of Highways in regard to Provincial Road 245 from Notre Dame. Can the Minister indicate what's going to be done this year on that particular road? On the new program, 245, yes, for 1977-78? I see it's for grade and gravel. Can the Minister assure me this is going to be done in 1977?

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member is referring to 242 and 245?

MR. EINARSON: Right.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I am not in a position to guarantee that. No matter which item you pick, I cannot guarantee — that's why it's in the program, we hope to have it done. We'll be tendering these projects but something unforeseen could happen that it may not be done, so therefore I don't think that I would want to go ahead and give the guarantee that every project that's on here will be done, for obvious reasons. That is the reason why we have them in the program, hoping to have them done this year.

MR. EINARSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister, has the completion of acquisition

of property been taken care of or is that not completed as yet, on that particular program, from 244 to 242?

MR. BURTNIAK: Usually, Mr. Chairman, what the members will see, if the acquisition of right-of-way has not been completed, then we don't as a rule put the program in, although it's listed as acquisition of right-of-way as the honourable members can see. On many locations what we have listed for this year is acquisition of right-of-way.

Now, by acquisition of right-of-way again, I repeat because we're trying to establish fully our three-year program, that if we do acquire the land this year, in the fiscal year 1977 - 78, that does not necessarily mean, although it may, that whatever is to be done there, whether it's upgrading, paving or whatever or widening, will be done in the year 1978-79. All we're doing, is to have enough work ready for us to go in from year to year without having to wait for the acquisition of right-of-way and slow up the program.

MR. EINARSON: Mr. Chairman, the Minister had a delegation a number of months ago where the land had to be acquired, I believe, in order to do a proper job of building up the road from, say, Notre Dame west, whatever portion that he chose to build up, and I believe then, at that time, land had to be acquired. That's why I'm wondering if that has already been completed?

MR. BURTNIAK: I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, if all the land had to be acquired, I think there was one or two parcels, I believe. Correct me if I'm wrong, I thought we had acquired some but there was some left to be acquired at that time.

MR. EINARSON: Mr. Chairman, that's quite true, but that land that was necessary to be acquired, is what I'm wondering if it's been completed?

MR. BURTNIAK: I'm sorry, I wouldn't be able to give the honourable member the answer, whether we have, but I would think we're pretty sure although I can't be positive that we have the land, but I would think we are because if we didn't have the necessary acquisition of land, we would have not put the item on the program and specifically stated grading and gravelling. I would think that we have the land now.

MR. EINARSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. MORRIS MCGREGOR: Mr. Chairman, I would like to enquire, on 259, this is 1.5, now this is a case of the Assiniboine Valley, the edge sliding out. It's been over a year since that hole — it's rather shocking that I see the acquisition of right-of-way as a projected schedule, with that thing being in that state. Is it a fact, Mr. Chairman, that the testing and the shifting that is going on in that particular terrain, that they haven't really got an answer to it? I know there was a similar situation on the opposite side of the valley two or more years ago and I'm just wondering, what is the program really? Is that liable to be done later this year or is it indeed not even maybe being considered?

MR. BURTNIAK: Mr. Chairman, this particular project reminds me very much of a similar situation that we have been experiencing in St. Lazare, and I think the Honourable Member for . . .

MR. MCGREGOR: Smith Falls.

MR. BURTNIAK: . . . for Virden is aware that as far as we know, we hope to proceed with it but here again, under these kind of circumstances, one really never knows until you get right into it.

MR. MCGREGOR: All right, the other question would be to do with access roads and I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, the Minister is aware of what I am going to ask him, and that is, the access road policy off of PR roads. I know the municipal people are definitely concerned about this. They are fair-minded people, I know they have approached the First Minister in 1973 and I believe they had a commitment from the Minister that a policy would be forthcoming. I'm not aware if there has been a policy. If there has been one, I'm not aware of it. Will that policy follow somewhat along the provincial trunk highway policy regarding access roads?

Of course, Mr. Chairman, I'm sure the Minister is aware of one community very close to my home area, the town of Lenore that's only less than a half-mile off and that Council is certainly concerned, when when are you coming up? The municipal people are not asking for more than that road in, they're not asking for as wide as that road, but just simply a half-mile access. Will there be a policy in the future, in this year or next year, regarding PRs?

MR. BURTNIAK: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the honourable member for mentioning this to me earlier this afternoon on the possibility of a program of access roads off of PRs. I had indicated some time earlier, a year or two ago or whenever it was, I think to the honourable member and to the members of the committee, that we were definitely looking to a policy of this kind. Unfortunately last year we tried to practise some constraint and we thought that as far as highways were concerned, since we have not devised a program of this kind, that this was best not to be proceeded with at this point in time.

Now, within the next year or two, I hope that this can be sort of reinstated again, Mr. Chairman, and we can take a good close look at it and perhaps implement that type of policy.

MR. MCGREGOR: The other question, it's really a minor one, but it's to do with signs. I come from the small community of Kenton and the Chamber of Commerce is always asking, when can we get a

sign on Number 121, and we got a real detailed letter from the Brandon office and it certainly brought down the Chamber of Commerce with that honourable gentleman's explanation. He certainly hadn't looked at the map and why and why not. And at the same time I drive out west of here and I see a sign on Number 1 Highway, Fortier, that maybe ten years ago had an elevator, it's nothing now. You go down a little farther and you see a sign, Beaver, I don't know, I can't find any place by the name of Beaver. You go on and you get an unlimited —(Interjection)—

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. MCGREGOR: And the point is —(Interjection)—

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. MCGREGOR: Mr. Chairman, I would like to know, in the one quarter that we've asked for, we've been denied and yet I do see these other signs. It might be well, if you had a Brylcreem sign, you'd get some revenue from it where you really don't get anything from a community that is no longer there. I realize there's a big stretch of remodeling of your four-lanes, they are all down, but I imagine one or two years from now these non-communities will go up along there and I can't understand why. What is the criteria? Is it miles, is it joins of other highways off that, say, from zero to Hamiota or Shoal Lake, or what is the criteria?

MR. BURTONIAK: First of all, I would say, Mr. Chairman, that the honourable member's point is well taken. I do agree that there are certain signs on the highways, not too many, but they are sort of obsolete. I think it was just a matter of not getting around to taking them off, or replacing or whatever. So we will take that particular question that the member has posed and we'll certainly give it every consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Minnedosa.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to question the Minister under this particular item on the construction, are there plans for the tourist access roads in the Thompson area? I don't know whether I missed it this afternoon; if I have, I can pick it up in the Hansard, but could the Minister tell us what roads are planned to provide access to new recreational areas in the Thompson area?

MR. BURTONIAK: I'm sorry, I'm not aware of anything of that nature, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BLAKE: There are no plans for new access to areas in the Thompson area at all?

MR. BURTONIAK: The only one, I think, if we have it here is . . . here's one, Paint Lake. It's not a new one.

MR. BLAKE: I realize that, Mr. Chairman, but we've just learned now that the Tourist Branch is building roads; the Department of Renewable Resources are building roads; and the Highways Branch are building roads. I don't want to belabour the point, the Member for Portage covered it, but it just seems unusual that the Department of Highways is not responsible for building all the bloody roads in the province. When you get it spread around in three departments, nobody is going to know who is in charge, what standards they are going to build to, or anything else. The Northlands Agreement, I realize, is shared with many departments, but there should be some overall control that we know — and I'm sure some of that Northlands money should be going into Thompson. There are delegations hitting the Minister of Resources, the Parks Minister, the Tourist Minister, to open up new lots in that Thompson area. Surely the Minister must be aware of the pressure on the Paint Lake area in Thompson and surely they must have some plans for a road to another lake somewhere in that area. That's what I'm asking him for.

MR. BURTONIAK: I believe I'm correct, I think, that the Member for Minnedosa is talking about the Partridge Crop Lake, I believe that is the . . .

MR. BLAKE: Well, Partridge Crop Lake is one, there are a lot of lakes up there and all they are asking for is access to them and they want the Parks Branch to give them some sites to put their cabins on.

MR. BURTONIAK: The Partridge Crop Lake is one of the areas that has been discussed for quite some time, I believe. As a matter of fact since I was in Tourism there were discussions about building the Partridge Crop Lake. Now, I don't know just where that stands right now, but . . .

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, this is exactly the point of my argument. Now, the Department of Highways doesn't know where in the hell the situation on that lake stands; I'm sure Renewable Resources don't know; and if I ask the Parks Branch, they'll say, "Well, that's Highways Department."

This is the exact point that we are trying to make, that it's absolutely ridiculous that there are three departments of this government running around building roads when you've got a Department of Highways that are capable, they've got the staff and the ability and it's just absolutely ridiculous and inconceivable that these other departments are running around building roads and your department doesn't know where the hell they are going or where they are building the roads to. And the people up north don't know, and they get shuffled from one department to another and it's absolutely ridiculous. This is what somebody's got to get a handle on.

MR. BURTONIAK: That's partly true but not entirely because, as I mentioned earlier, the roads that the honourable member is referring to in the north, they are winter roads, roads to the communities which are isolated. That falls under the Department of Northern Affairs.

MR. BLAKE: Which should name the roads and delegate them to your department to build.

MR. BURTONIAK: As I stated earlier, Mr. Chairman, that was the policy that was devised by this government. Now, the honourable member can argue whether it's right or wrong, but . . .

MR. BLAKE: It sure as hell can't be right.

MR. BURTONIAK: You may think so and that's your privilege of course and I appreciate that, but as I say again, the roads that are being constructed in the north are not up to the standard that we in the Highways Department are building for PRs and PTHs and the like. The tourist roads, this is nothing new, I might say, Mr. Chairman, because I can go back seven, eight years ago, when I was in Tourism, and we did have some roads that were constructed not exactly by the Department of Tourism, but by Highways for Tourism. We supplied the funds. We didn't have the staff at the time that the Department of Tourism has now, and we were not able to do so, but we were very much involved in certain areas like Hecla Island and others, Black Island, I should say, where some of these roads were punched through.

So as I say, it's really nothing all that new and really, as far as the northern roads as such are concerned, I think really that the Department of Northern Affairs, in my view at least and the view of the government, is the proper department to look after their northern roads, and barges and the likes of that.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, I wasn't referring to a winter road or a road that might lead to a barge site for winter freighting. It would have to be considered an all-weather road that the tourists can get in and out to summer cottages in the summer months. That would have to be a reasonably good grade and gravel road. Now maybe the Minister would give us his own impressions. Would he prefer that the road construction program were under complete control of his department, or is he happy with this slipshod method of everybody running off, building little roads here and there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, whether the Minister is happy or not, I don't think is the question. I would think, Mr. Chairman' although I appreciate the comments made by the honourable member, but I am just wondering whether we are discussing the Estimates of the Department of Highways, or are we discussing policy of the government?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Minnedosa.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, I think it could be both, because you provide for the construction of a highway system acceptable to the travelling public that serves new industries and there's also some tourism. I wanted to know what roads were going to be built in the Thompson area to service tourism and not so much tourism, the residents there that are demanding very strongly, that they be allowed access to some of these lakes to provide recreation facilities for their families. Not so much for outsiders, but for their own families. And you tell me that the only thing on the program is maybe to Partridge Crop Lake, that maybe Parks Branch might build, maybe Renewable Resources or Northern Affairs might build it. Now that's not very satisfactory to people in the north. They would like to know who's going to build it, when it's going to be built, and how fast they can get maybe another couple of roads into those recreation areas to provide for cottage sites.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I doubt very much, really, if the Department of Northern Affairs or Department of Renewable Resources would build that kind of a road. It could be constructed by Highways or by the Department of Tourism, but certainly not the other two. Those aren't the kind of roads that they construct.

MR. BLAKE: We'll be going into Northern Affairs very shortly, and we're going to be questioning the Minister of Renewable Resources on this, and I'll bet you right now, two bits will get you half, that he's going to say, "Well' that's Highways Department. I won't answer those questions, you can't press me, that will be Highways Department." And how in the devil do we get the answers?

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I just pointed out to the member that I would doubt very much if Northern Affairs, or Renewable Resources would be constructing that road to Partridge Crop. It would either by Highways or Tourism, but not the Department of Renewable Resources or Northern Affairs, I'm pretty certain of that right now.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, as I say, obviously we're not going to get answers on what plans are in store for the Thompson area to open up new areas. Hopefully, when we get into Tourism or Northern Affairs, we may get some action. The people up there are asking, and this is why I brought it out this evening, because it's inconceivable to me that the road program is going to be under three or four departments. I just fail to see it. Carry on, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Roblin.

MR. MCKENZIE: Mr. Chairman, I dare say, that we could likely spend the last of this summer here dealing with each individual constituency road. I wonder, would it not be possible, another time, for us to meet like we do in Public Utilities to deal with this. We can argue — the Minister talks about Provincial Trunk Highway No. 20, he said, what a horrible condition it was in the days that we were government, the Roblin government — I can tell him today' it's no better, only in his own constituency. He's paved 20 in his own constituency and left the rest of it just like it was.

MR. BURTONIAK: Oh, Mr. Chairman, I beg your pardon. Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, that is absolutely a lie. The honourable member knows damn well that the road, all the way from 20A, all the way down, past Winnipegosis, north of Winnipegosis, is paved, not just in my constituency. It takes in Roblin constituency, Ste. Rose constituency, as well as Dauphin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. That is not a point of order. The Honourable Member for Roblin.

MR. MCKENZIE: That's my point, Mr. Chairman. We can argue about these PR roads, the Provincial Trunk Highways, and we could be here forever, whether they're fair, whether they're good, whether they're medium. I wonder if there isn't some other vehicle that we could use to deal with these matters in committee, because, as I say, this could go on and on forever. I have a list here of roads that would make your head swim, but I'm not going to deal with them. I would like to deal with the wide-ranging policies of this government.

First of all, I think we have enough evidence in the committee that this government shouldn't be managing the transportation problems of our province, because they don't know how. It's split over three or four departments, this Minister doesn't have the answers, and he blames another Minister, and we go to the other committee and they blame them. I wonder now, energy is running out' by the 1980s, we're going to be likely rationing gasoline in this province, I wonder under construction here, if he can give this committee the plans of this government for the next five or six or ten years. Railways are going to be abandoned. This province is going to be a new system. We're going to have to get up with new ideas. Are you going to ration gasoline? And where are we going to go in the next ten years? Can you give us some idea?

What kind of arterial roads are you building, what ones are you going to concentrate on, what lines do you suspect are going to be abandoned by the railways, are you prepared to build those roads and give us a transportation system which will likely go with trucks, so we have to save what energy we have, and with the price of energy today in this province, we can't afford that luxury much longer, because most of us are likely going to have to walk or ride on a bus. So we're going to have to save our energy and either ride on a bus and put five or six people back in a car instead of what you see in the city here every day, one person going to and from work.

So would the Minister give us, in this committee, some idea of the plans of this government for the next four or five years, what arterial routes, what PR roads are you going to construct, which ones are we going to put our heavy trucks on, and where are we going?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before the Honourable Minister answers, I do recall, the committee has had some discussion and debate on planning and design of roads and having to do with the closing of railways. The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I was just going to mention the very same thing. However, I don't mind repeating, briefly, on that particular topic that was discussed planning and design. I did indicate the position of the government in regard to rail line abandonment. I suggested at that time and I will suggest again, that it doesn't matter what kind of roads you build to carry what loads, there is no cheaper way of transporting heavy goods than by rail. Although we have to look at some of the possibilities of some abandonment, as I said before, I don't think we can prevent them all from being abandoned, but I think we can make a very strong plea, as we have in the past. We'll do it again to the Federal Government to consider the possibility of retaining as many of the branch lines in the province of Manitoba as we can.

At the same time, I have also indicated that we do have a highway strengthening program. I don't know what I have to do to get this through to the members opposite here. We have a highway strengthening program to carry 110,000 pound gross vehicle weights. This is the program which is cost-shared with the Federal Government' on certain PTHs. We also have a program which the Province has embarked on on its own to increase the gross weight on some of our — not entirely all — but in most of our other PTHs, and I think that is about the situation you can find in any other province of western Canada or eastern Canada as well, in regards to saving of energy and the road programs.

MR. MCKENZIE: That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Gladstone.

MR. FERGUSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly don't want to dwell on this very much longer. I know we've spent lots of time with everybody talking about their roads. However, prior to my coming into the Legislature, we had a period of government also in my area, and I know that he was very well looked after, the Honourable Mr. Shoemaker. But we've never been fortunate enough to be on the side of government, so consequently, I guess our roads are maybe a little worse than anyone's.

The two roads that I would like to speak about — one is 352, south of Arden, and the reason being here — that in the construction of the No. 1 Highway, there always is a considerable amount of gravel moving over this area. As I say the construction of No. 1 has brought on a considerably heavier load and municipalities are feeling that they would like to see something, at least the road maintained in its present position or upgrade it a bit, because it takes a terrible beating.

The other one is a perennial one, 260 from north of Plumas, if you could tie that in with the Ste. Rose grid, why, it would be quite a help. This is an area that has long hauls to the elevators and this is one area that I would like to see upgraded. I think that would cover what I have to say, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, the points made by the Member for Gladstone and Neepawa certainly will be considered in the future programs. I think his points are well taken.

MR. FERGUSON: That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Brandon West.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the Minister about Provincial Road 250. As he knows, that's the road that runs from Souris to the south border of Riding Mountain National Park. Some years ago, a section of that road was hard-surfaced from the town of Souris to 349. I believe all that area within the constituency of Souris-Killarney now has hard top. I'm wondering why the section between 349 and Trans-Canada No. 1 is still in a state of somewhat disrepair. It's a very difficult surface to maintain a good gravel top on. It's an extremely dusty road. It has fairly heavy traffic for a provincial road, I believe. I know this has been brought to the attention of the Minister. I have done it, last year at least, and perhaps the year before that. I wonder if he can tell me what the priorities are now for dealing with this particular section of the road.

MR. BURTONIAK: As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, there are many many requests for certain sections of various highways, PRs, PTHs, requests come from individuals, from organizations and municipalities and the likes. Just to put it very bluntly, we just were not able to put everything on the program last year or this year. As I say, I certainly would like to have all roads in Manitoba paved, but of course that just isn't possible. The honourable member mentions it again, I certainly appreciate his concern. We're taking a note of it and hopefully, perhaps in the next fiscal year, we'll be able to look into it and see if something can be done by widening it or whatever is necessary to do on that particular stretch of road.

MR. MCGILL: I think the grade width is the same on the improved hard-surfaced part of the road, as now exists on the section between 349 and the Trans-Canada No. 1. I don't think there's any problem there, although there may be one existing that I am not aware of. However, I'm wondering why — this hard-surfacing would have been done two or three years ago, perhaps, the first section, from Souris to 349 — and whether it was intended at that time to proceed year by year to hard top the road in a northerly direction until the heavily travelled parts of it, I would think between Rivers and Souris might be the least traffic.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, I think that it's much longer than two or three years. I could be wrong, but I think it's more than two or three years that this section from Souris to 349 was paved. Now, the reason for that, I can't say offhand. What warranted the paving of this road was probably the traffic flow in there. Now, if there is still a heavy traffic flow from there on to No. 1 — I don't know offhand I don't have the traffic count in front of me here — but I would think that originally when that road was done, that section from Souris to 349, there had to be a good reason for it. Perhaps it was in worse shape than the more northerly part of it, that's why it was probably looked after at that time. But I'm pretty sure it's more than three years.

MR. MCGILL: Then it wasn't part of a program that was intended to advance year by year with the hard topping north from there?

MR. BURTONIAK: Usually, Mr. Chairman, that's the policy we like to follow, but that doesn't mean we can always live up to it, unfortunately, on every road that we do pave.

MR. MCGILL: Is the Minister able to give me any projection of this? I see it's not in the Estimates for this year. At least is it the intention of the department to do this in the succeeding year?

MR. BURTONIAK: The best way I could answer that, Mr. Chairman, is when we review our overall program for the following year, we will certainly give that consideration.

MR. MCGILL: I'd like to switch now to No. 10 Highway, Mr. Chairman, and that section particularly that goes through the City of Brandon, it's 18th Street, really, that I'm talking about. The Minister is aware of the area from Richmond Avenue to Victoria. Part of that was widened and a median established, and we now have the situation where there's a narrowing of that road, and the number of lanes decreases, from about Van Horne Avenue to Victoria. It's one of the most noticeable narrowing areas, and I think it's somewhat dangerous in that area for people who are not familiar with this, particularly traffic from out of town going through there, who may get into difficulty just at the point where the median ends and the two lanes come into a narrower stretch. What is the program that the department has in mind? I see no money in here for this particular project.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, what the Member for Brandon West described is quite accurate. We in the department are quite aware of the situation, and it's, as I say, a dangerous situation there. Our district office and I think some of the staff from here have been meeting with the City of Brandon on that particular question and discussions have been held. I think that what is really left now is pretty well the design. We hope that once we have full agreement on both sides, we will be able to proceed. We may have some funds. We never know, sometimes you run into some difficult problems, the

weather, or whatever, and you could shift funds around' so we hope that whether it's now or maybe later on in the season, we'll be able to look at it' and see if improvements can be made like we did the rest of the way.

MR. MCGILL: Is there any money in these appropriations for that work?

MR. BURTONIAK: Not in here, no. We did not include it until we got an agreement with the city as to exactly what the design is going to be like.

MR. MCGILL: Is there any way then, you say that you may be able, this summer, to proceed with this work. Is there any way financially that this can be achieved under the present appropriations?

MR. BURTONIAK: As I said, as long as it's not too late in the season, we may be able to do that. If we happen to run into some problems with some other project — when I say problems I am referring to weather conditions and things of that nature. Or, well, it could be several reasons, and if we feel that it's a very necessary thing, and we know it is, as I say, as long as we fully agree with the City of Brandon as to what the design is to be, we hope that we'll be able to do something on it this summer.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, is the delay which has occurred up to this point in pursuing this work on 18th Street, is it in any way connected to a difficulty with property owners along that street?

MR. BURTONIAK: Partly, accesses and so on.

MR. MCGILL: Was it the intention to proceed earlier, last year perhaps, and was there a difficulty that arose that caused it to be delayed?

MR. BURTONIAK: Yes, that's right, maybe not last year, but certainly if we would have had the complete clearance last year, we certainly, I'm pretty sure, would have been in the program for this year, you know, fully in the program.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, have these technical difficulties, i.e. property owners' concerns about the widening of the street in that area, have they been overcome? Is there any impediment still remaining?

MR. BURTONIAK: This is where the problem seems to lie, as I understand it, but it hasn't been completely finalized. Now, the last information that I received is that we are very close to getting some agreement as far as all parties are concerned.

MR. MCGILL: Where does the responsibility lie for resolving this difficulty? Is it with the Province of Manitoba or with the City of Brandon?

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, it's a combination of both, I would think. I don't think that the province wants to go into the City of Brandon or any other town or city and arbitrarily say we will do this, that and the other thing. The city, in this case, is the traffic authority anyway. So I think it has to be sort of a mutual agreement and we also try to consider what it will mean to the residents and the likes of that that are involved. So once that is all resolved, we will be able to proceed and hopefully can do it this year.

MR. MCGILL: So as far as you are concerned, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, Brandon has done what is necessary in this respect to bring the project to a point where it would be possible to proceed this summer. Is that essentially a proper summation of the situation?

MR. BURTONIAK: As far as I know, yes, I would think so.

MR. MCGILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

MR. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I also have some parochial concerns, but first of all I would just like to briefly note that the Capital Works Project as far as construction of provincial trunk highways and provincial road networks and related projects has been cut and we're facing almost a 20 per cent cut this year. Now, I wonder if the Minister could tell us if that will mean a reduction in staff as far as the Highways Department is concerned. I think that the cutback means that we will have a certain number of employees that will be suffering from lack of work.

Now, I believe that this is one area where this government should not have cut. I think that road construction should be going ahead. I would like to ask the Minister what he feels the average increased cost of construction over last year would be due to inflation? In other words, the new tenders that are arriving, what is the department estimating the increased cost of construction for this year will be? I would like to point out to the Minister that maybe, if the government is concerned with creating jobs and that type of thing, that it could possibly engage in more road construction instead of building things like Flyer buses. I think the people maybe that are employed at Flyer . . . If the government wants to subsidize a facility such as that to the tune of \$7 million a year, it could be much more beneficially spent on road-building construction.

The other point was raised by the Member for Minnedosa and I would like to just elaborate on that for just a second too. In the Hecla Island area we've got the Highway Department building 2.8 miles right now, reconstructing it to the tune of some \$800,000.00. We've got the Department of Tourism building roads on Hecla Island itself, and then we've got the Department of Renewable Resources working on Black Island. And then to connect that all up, apparently we've got Northern Affairs dealing with the Federal Government for a road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Now, the point that the Member for Minnedosa made, I think is very well taken. I think that this is

one of the cases where the right arm doesn't know what the left arm is doing and I would suggest to the Minister that he speak with his fellow colleagues in the Cabinet and try and get this all under one Ministry. As I mentioned, you have got this cut in budget, you're going to have some people around that possibly aren't as active as they could be in the road-building project and if you brought all this under one umbrella, namely all this road construction that is going on in the different areas, possibly you could keep these people going.

Again, I would like to say that I think that road construction in the province is a very important part of not only our social stay-option program that this government has mentioned so often that it wants to implement, but it's also paramount if we want to make sure that we can keep these communities going.

So with those comments, I would just like to ask the Minister if the tenders for the No. 12 Highway north of Steinbach going through the Trans Canada Highway, if the tenders for that particular piece of road that is mentioned in the Highways project schedule, is going to be tendered for this year?

MR. BURTNIAK: Mr. Chairman, the member is enquiring about No. 12, eight-and-a-half miles north, First Avenue north of Steinbach. Is that the grade and structures? Well, as I say, these programs that are listed here for the forthcoming year and the carry over ones, of course we hope to be able to do them this year. Now, whether we can complete them all or not is anybody's guess. It depends on many things such as the weather and the likes and last year, I might point out, we had an exceptionally good year. We went way beyond our expectations because of the fine weather in the fall of the year and all summer.

It's not very often that **that happens. Most of our construction programs are not completed like they were last year because of the early freeze-up or wet weather and so the program has to stop; last year it did not. So as I say, barring unforeseen weather conditions, we hope to be able to do most of the projects that are on the list.**

Mr. Chairman, in regard to the comments that the Honourable Member for La Verendrye made suggesting that perhaps we should employ some people from Flyer Industry or any other places that have been laid off in the Department of Highways, I want to point out to the honourable member that we are dealing here with Current Estimates. I think we had this similar discussion last year and rightly or wrongly, I always feel that most of our highways — that's my view and that is the direction we've been going the last few years — that I would like to see highways under Capital Construction because I believe a highway is a capital program, is a capital project, rather more so than a current one. So here we are discussing only the current amounts.

Now, when we have our Capital Supply Bill and the rest, the members will know what the program will be in total for this year.

But I want to point out to the honourable members that in the last five or six years, we have continued to increase the overall total, both current and capital, as far as our highway program is concerned, taking into consideration the inflationary costs, until we find that if you take the years 1969-70 to 1975-76, for example, those six years, we increased the highway program overall, not only for construction, but the overall program, from \$52.8 million to \$112.3 million, which gives us an increase of something like 115 percent in the last six years or on the average of something over 19 percent a year. Maybe I shouldn't bring this point up at this time, but I think comparisons ought to be made so if you want to make comparisons, I think that if you look at the same six-year period, 1964-65, the total amount spent on the highway program was \$32.8 million and up to 1968-69 it was \$46.5 or an increase in those six years of 45 percent or seven-and-a-half percent a year. So, really, I think that we have tried to keep up with the road program, taking in the increases every year as well as allowing for the inflationary costs.

Now, as far as the member asking the question as to what our contracts and the likes might be as far as inflation is concerned, it's very difficult to say for sure but we are aiming around eight to ten percent at this point in time.

MR. BANMAN: I wonder if the Minister would confirm though that as far as his share of the pie, in other words, his share of the total budget, the Highways Department has been continually falling behind compared to what it was in the past.

MR. BURTNIAK: I don't think it is because I think if my honourable friend would talk to any of the contractors in the Province of Manitoba, you will find that the contractors are happy. They are certainly not hungry. They have more to do than what they can handle in Manitoba. We find that many of them are bidding and as a matter of fact at times we have to watch it very closely so that some contractors don't get too many jobs and might not be able to finish them off properly. So this has been watched very closely and I might say that we have a number of contractors that have started up in the last few years because of the program that we followed in the last five or six years whereby we have not had the peaks and valleys; we have tried to stabilize the program at a certain level, allowing for some increase as well as, as I said, inflationary costs. This has been good both for the people of Manitoba and for the contractors as a whole.

So that we have had a very stable program over the last five or six years and we hope to continue in

this manner in the future.

MR. BANMAN: The Minister mentioned that they had a good year and they did a lot of construction. I wonder, was that total \$29 million spent?

MR. BURTONIAK: The amount that was spent last year on highways construction, that's both capital and current, was something around \$65 million.

MR. BANMAN: That's compared to the \$90 million that we passed in the House? I'm sorry, the capital construction?

MR. BURTONIAK: The capital construction, that's right, capital and current.

MR. BANMAN. Capital and current. And what was the total voted by the Legislature?

MR. BURTONIAK: Sixty-two point eight, I believe it was, so we overexpended our budget last year, the first time in a long long time.

MR. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. LYON: Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of local questions for the Minister with respect to matters that have been raised in Souris-Killarney. Number one, I wonder if the Minister could tell me what investigations or plans, if any, his department has for the construction of a bridge across the Assiniboine River in the vicinity of Treesbank? I'm sure he's been in receipt of a number of submissions from time to time to hook up the area in question with No. 340 Highway across the Assiniboine River at or near a point just to the north and slightly to the west of Treesbank.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, we have had representation from that area on a number of occasions over the last while, the last year or so. As I recollect, there has been some disagreement as to what should be done there, as to where a bridge, if one is to be placed, as to where that bridge should go. I think that because of the two ferries, the Treesbank and the Stockton ferries — and there is disagreement as between the two localities and that's left sort of in abeyance until we get agreement from the community as to what they want to decide to do.

MR. LYON: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister indicate what studies, if any, his department has undertaken with respect to a crossing of the river in the Treesbank area?

MR. BURTONIAK: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, if he has a copy of the map, I think it would be easier to explain. As you know, Shilo is a pretty active place nowadays and we have looked at the possibility of extending the road 340, or at least we have had that suggested to us, that PR 340 be moved farther west about a mile or so because of the Shilo boundary there. Then that would take the road 340 straight down, oh, somewhere just to the west of Treesbank, where the ferry is now. So that has been one proposal.

I'm told that the Engineering Department has taken the soundings there and all that, so we have something on file on that particular question.

MR. LYON: It's on file but not at the planning stage, is that correct, Mr. Chairman?

MR. BURTONIAK: We feel that that would be the best place to put in a break, where I just mentioned. As I say, we have that on file now but we haven't proceeded with it any further. I might point out, Mr. Chairman, as I stated earlier, there is also the question of moving the PR 340 another mile west.

I personally feel and I believe that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition probably would agree with me, that I strongly feel that if this were to be done, I don't think that it should be done at the expense of the Provincial Government. I think that the Federal Government should participate in any cost that might be incurred as far as the moving and relocation of PR 340. I'm afraid we haven't been very successful in getting that agreement from the Federal Government as yet, but I certainly feel that this should be part of their expense. After all, it's their camp there, it is a Federal camp there, so if they want to move the boundaries over, I think they should contribute some of the cost of relocation of this particular road.

MR. LYON: Has the Minister or his department had any negotiations with the Department of National Defence with respect to the movement of 340?

MR. BURTONIAK: Yes, we have, that's right.

MR. LYON: Locally or with headquarters in Ottawa?

MR. BURTONIAK: Locally here in Winnipeg.

MR. LYON: A second matter, Mr. Chairman, that I know the Deputy Minister is well familiar with, we've had a chat or two about it and some others in the department. I'm referring to the south bridge in the Town of Wawanessa, the north approach to which was washed out in the flood last year. I know that the Minister's department has undertaken some studies there and that they have been in touch with the Mayor, Mr. Wilton and other members of the . . . well, principally the mayor. And the indication I believe that they are giving to the town council in Wawanessa is that it would be impossible, according to their studies so far, to replace the north approach to that bridge and that to relocate the bridge would cost somewhere in the area of \$300,000.00. I was wondering if the Minister had had any further information or his department any further discussions in recent weeks with the

town and what other alternatives, if any, there might be to the placing of a crossing on the Souris River, the replacement of that crossing on the Souris River for the convenience of not only the towns people but people travelling within that whole market area. It was a traditional bridge that was used locally by a lot of people. The detour causes a great deal of disaccommodation. There's another matter that I'll raise a little later, but I was wondering if there had been anything further in his discussions with the Town of Wawanesa.

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I wish it was quite that simple to put in an additional piece or span in there at that \$300,000 but that is — or whatever the price — but that isn't quite the case. There is a slip section which our engineers have checked, which goes way back into the north bank. I understand there are some homes close by, I don't know how many but I believe there are a few, and there is a possibility that they may be in danger very shortly if we get another high water in the spring, maybe not this year but within the next year or two and you never know what can happen this year, that they may be in danger as well. If we were to build or to fix the existing bridge, we're talking about a span of about 350 feet to get past the slide and that doesn't guarantee us that that bridge will stay there and we're talking about close to three quarters of a million dollars if not more. So that is an awful lot of money. And then, of course, the engineers, and rightly so, would not recommend doing this on the existing location. So, if a bridge were to be built there, it would have to be moved perhaps east, perhaps east or west, I'm not sure, but certainly it would have to be moved to another location to get away from the existing slide that appears to be there and I realize that it may inconvenience some people there but there are other ways of getting around. I don't think there is that many people that are suffering very much. I do know that it may take them a little farther away, a few more miles to get around to town and, of course, that is an inconvenience. I appreciate that. But I don't think there are that many families that are inconvenienced very badly. However, I would say this to the Leader of the Opposition that if there is a further possibility in that area of further development or industry or something, which I understand is a possibility of this developing, then it becomes a different matter and I suppose the province will have to build a new bridge but perhaps not on the same location. It will have to be relocated in another location.

MR. LYON: Well, Mr. Chairman I'm happy to hear the Minister make that comment and commitment because I'm sure he'll be happy as the people in Wawanesa are happy to be advised as I was recently, that there is a new industry going in on the south side of the river there. I'm advised it's to be a mushroom plant, costing somewhere between \$200 and \$300 million and providing some employment in the area and the person . . .

A MEMBER: Thousand.

MR. LYON: Thousand. I apologize, Mr. Chairman. I thought for a moment we were talking about Hydro losses — \$200,000 to \$300,000.00. — (Interjection) — No, I'm so used to, Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the Minister of Agriculture, to reading his own figures and repeating them to him that I . . . we don't do things of that size in Wawanesa, but this plant, I am advised is going in. There is some construction, according to the information that I have, under way and there have been some contacts with some members of the Minister's department in that district, with respect to the bridge, because the presence of the bridge will play an important part as to the location of the plant which I am advised is under construction at the present time. So I would hope that in the light of this information which has just recently come to me, and which I will in turn pass along to the Minister by way of letter, that perhaps we can arrange to meet with the . . . we'll have the Mayor and any of his councillors come in, along with the promoters of the new plant and indicate the absolute necessity of some crossing being made there for the purpose of this industry.

The information that we have to date is that this plant will cost ultimately \$350,000, employing 18 to 20 persons. There is a possibility also of a canning operation in connection with it. To give the Minister some idea as a preliminary of what is involved if the bridge is not in place: One of the factors they need, of course, for the new plant is a ready supply of manure from the horse stables that are in Wawanesa. To bring the manure to the plant would be a one mile trip via the bridge. However, to transport the manure by detour is six and a half miles. For people living in the town it would be a half mile trip from the town to the plant via the bridge where it's presently located although washed out and fifteen miles return trip via the detour. So I think the Minister can begin to see that there are some economics here. If the Town of Wawanesa is to continue to expand and to attract that kind of natural plant, that it will be necessary and I'm happy to have the Minister's commitment that they will look at it again, it will be necessary to reconsider this project in the light of the development of the town.

MR. BURTONIAK: At this point in time, Mr. Chairman, I hope that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't take my statement wrongly. I don't think that even with the industry that is going to be established there, I would have to be fair and I want to state to the Leader of the Opposition that I would doubt whether we would be able to construct the bridge say, this summer, but we'll certainly get a priority if the plant is in place, for the next fiscal year's program. You know, we may be able to make a start or something but I would doubt very much because that kind of money — probably we're talking about closer to a million dollars — it would be very difficult to find, to start constructing a

bridge of that capacity this particular construction year. But we would have to consider the possibilities. I just want to make that clear so that the Leader of the Opposition would understand that I'm not committing that bridge for this particular year. We will have to see what possibilities there may be, but I certainly cannot make that commitment, but I can say that in the next fiscal year certainly, with the plant going in there, that would be one of our priorities.

MR. LYON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Rhineland.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I notice that for the third year in a row now we have purchase of right of way, a grade widening and shoulder gravel and structures on No. 14 highway and yet we have seen no activity there except possibly there has been some purchase of the right of way. I wonder, can the Minister tell us whether we can see some activity there this year? Are they going to start widening the shoulders and putting gravel on them, or just exactly where do we stand with the No. 14 Highway?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the reason that this is in the carry-over part of the program is simply that we — and when I say we I'm talking about the land acquisition people — have run into certain problems in acquiring the right of way in certain areas along this 16 mile stretch and that is the reason why it hasn't proceeded any further than it has.

MR. BROWN: Well Minister could tell me ' I wonder if the how many settlements remain to be made. As far as I can determine there are only very few settlements that are remaining and some of these are due to the fact that there are supposed to be considerable changes as far as drainage is concerned, which some of the people are rather concerned about. In this one particular instance there is a 24-inch culvert going through the highway and apparently the Department of Mines and Natural Resources has planned for two 48-inch culverts going through the highway and yet we are only draining 120 acres of land in that particular area and this 24-inch culvert can handle this very well. Now in addition to this I understand that the municipality is supposed to spend about \$100,000 on extra drainage in that particular area and we, for the life of us, cannot see where building shoulders onto a highway is going to give us any more water than what we have at the present time and in that particular area we seem to have adequate drainage.

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, Mr. Chairman, the engineers from Water Control when they look at all the drainage problems, they make the suggestion as to what is required and really, it has nothing to do with the shoulders of the road, it's the amount of water that may pass through there at a given time and they take all these things into consideration and they recommend to the Department of Highways as to what size of pipe or culvert is to be placed. So that really it is the Water Control that makes the decisions as far as the size of culverts that are to be installed in a given road.

MR. BROWN: I wonder if the Minister can tell me how many settlements still remain to be made in that particular area?

MR. BURTONIAK: Yes, we don't have it, Mr. Chairman. The member should know that the Department of Public Works is the department where the land acquisition people fall under and they would probably have that information. Land acquisition, rather than under Highways. We don't have that information.

MR. BROWN: If these settlements could be made within the next month or so, or six weeks or so, I wonder would the department be ready then to go ahead with construction and widening of the shoulder.

MR. BURTONIAK: The only thing we could do, Mr. Chairman . . . I'd like to say to the honourable member that we will certainly check with Public Works. I'm not in position to see if there are any more properties to be purchased and if there are, how many and so on. They can supply the information in a short time.

MR. BROWN: I would appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to go to the No. 3 Highway now. As you know' we have a lot of potatoes going out of Winkler, to Carberry, to Winnipeg and a lot of them going to Alberta. We have a portion of twelve miles on the No. 3 Highway which says 74,000 pound load limit on it and all the rest of it is 80,000. Now, because of this 12 miles these trucks cannot carry a full load and I notice that there is a bridge that is supposed to be constructed on the No. 3 Highway this year, if I'm right, which would be one of the major bridges which possibly would be restricting this to 74,000 pounds. I wonder when this is constructed, would we then be able to get a higher load limit on that portion of highway?

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, you know, this is what we are faced with, even with the Highway Strengthening Program, where we go to 110,000 pounds' there are certain sections of road we could not declare as 110,000 pounds because of structures and this is the same situation, very much the same similar situation here. I am not aware, Mr. Chairman, whether this is the only bridge, there may be others. But because of the weakness in the structures that are presently there, we were not able to increase the load weight to 80,000 pounds. Now, as I say, I am not aware whether this is the only bridge we're talking about or . . . oh, there's three, there's three structures here that are on the

program. I believe this is the area we're talking about. No. 3 highway?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, it's between . . . from Jordan south . . .

MR. BURTONIAK: No, we don't have anything on there, Mr. Chairman, as far as the bridges are concerned in that particular area. In looking at the carryover on this Program I don't find it. But I would think that is perhaps one of the reasons . . . Mr. Chairman, maybe we will get the information. There are several box culverts, I am told, that have to be replaced before we can move in the direction of increasing the . . . 1,000 pounds. Once that is done, I'm sure that will be looked after.

MR. BROWN: The bridge on the Dead Horse Creek, that's on the program as well. I think I saw this in your annual report. I couldn't find it in this . . .

MR. BURTONIAK: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the honourable member.

MR. BROWN: The bridge on the Dead Horse Creek on No. 3.

MR. BURTONIAK: I'm just wondering if the honourable member is inquiring about that bridge. I believe it's in the report. That bridge would have been constructed, would it not?

MR. BROWN: That bridge is to be relocated half a mile south from where it is at the present time. They're changing the drain over there, the Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

MR. BURTONIAK: We wouldn't know anything about that, Mr. Chairman. It wouldn't be in our program.

MR. BROWN: Would Mines and Natural Resources be building the bridge?

MR. BURTONIAK: That's right. We don't have it here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Minnedosa.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, there's just one point I wanted to bring up. A year or so ago there was a proposal made to the town of Minnedosa for widening and boulevarding the Main Street through the town, Highway 4A where it runs through the town and rejoins 10. It required parallel parking in the town and the town council voted it down, so apparently the program was not proceeded with. Is that a qualification of the department, that they would have to go to parallel parking in order to have the Main Street . . .

MR. BURTONIAK: Usually, Mr. Chairman' that is preferable, although I have to admit that there have been one or two occasions where it was not possible, but we would prefer it for safety of all concerned. I would say also that where this has been done, parallel parking has been put in, the people who opposed it originally would not part with it now. They really like it and they really know what it means from the safety point of view. But I do realize, it almost seems everywhere we enter this kind of a situation that originally there seems to be opposition, resistance, to the idea of parallel parking.

MR. BLAKE: I've seen this happen, Mr. Chairman, in two different towns that I worked in, and I agree with the Minister that once it's in, it's extremely acceptable. I don't know how you overcome that feeling. I know I was approached by one of the councillors at home one morning to see what I thought of it. I said, "It's the best thing since sliced bread", and he said, "Well, there's no point in talking to you any more." So my opinion obviously wasn't sought after that. I just wondered if they come back with strong recommendations or reasons why it shouldn't be, there's still a possibility that they may get some upgrading on this street if they can convince you that parallel parking is not absolutely essential, I suppose.

MR. BURTONIAK: Usually, one of the answers, or the things that have been said at this point in time, is, what are we going to do with the additional cars if we're not going to be able to accommodate them if we go to parallel parking. But somehow that's always resolved, and as I said, you hate to admit the fact, at times, in certain localities, we have softened up, so to speak, and have agreed with the town not to go to parallel parking. Of course, it's very much against our liking, because we do know that there are many safety factors in doing it the other way. We don't want to say that we will bend on every occasion, because once you do that then you might as well forget about policy. It's not only because of the strong representation, there are several other things that enter into the picture that we may reconsider. Barring that, we take a pretty firm stand in suggesting parallel parking.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Brandon-West.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I refer the Minister to Page 9 of the Construction Program, Item 6 from the top. Trans-Canada Highway West, 15.3 miles from the west junction of 1A west to Brandon and the appropriation or work is the acquisition of right of way. My question to the Minister is, does this then take us past that section of the road between Kemnay and the west access road to the town of Alexander?

MR. BURTONIAK: I'm wondering, Mr. Chairman, if we can't supply the answer to the member — well maybe we can — If we can't I was going to take it as notice and give it to you tomorrow . . . From Kemnay . . .

MR. MCGILL: Kemnay to Griswold. It goes all the way to Griswold.

MR. BURTONIAK: It's 15.3 miles, I would think so. 21 . . . so that would be the distance.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, this takes us then through the area where we have what many people

consider is the most substandard part of Trans Canada Highway in Manitoba' and that is that curve just on the east approach to the Alexander access road. Mr. Chairman, I guess I don't need to remind the Minister that there have been a number of fatalities in that area in the past few months, and while it would be unfair to relate all of those fatalities to that particular turn, that "S" turn and change of elevation that occurs on the east side of Alexander, I do think that part of the road continues to be a real hazard. I am wondering if the Minister has anything in mind for that section, short of waiting for the divided highway that's going to go through there.

MR. BURTONIAK: Mr. Chairman, it all depends, I would think as to when the four laning is going to be proceeded with in that particular location. If it is some time in the near future, then I wouldn't think that it would be wise for us to spend the additional dollars in trying to do something at the present time. However, if it's some time in the distant future then perhaps we will have to do something there to try and correct the situation.

MR. MCGILL: When will the Minister know then whether it is in the immediate future or some time in the distant future?

MR. BURTONIAK: At the present time, I would have to say our plans are not to four lane in the immediate future the road from Brandon to the Saskatchewan border. Traffic count does not indicate that it's necessary at this point in time. The traffic volume is not as great as it is between Brandon and Winnipeg and east. So, that again may depend on the traffic flow. At the present time, it does not warrant four laning. So I would have to say that perhaps this is something in the distant future that we will be looking at, as far as four laning is concerned from Brandon to the Saskatchewan border. That being the case, I suppose we would have to keep a close eye and a watch on that particular section that the member is referring to.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, keeping a close eye on it will be all very well and good, but I'm afraid it won't really prevent occurrences similar to the ones that have occurred in the past.

I'm wondering, if this present road is to be used for either the west-bound lane or the east-bound lane in future, why is it not possible to do some reconstruction on that curve, which I don't think would be acceptable, even in a single direction traffic.

MR. BURTONIAK: Well, here again, we run into right of way problems, but I think I'd have to say the point is well taken and perhaps we should examine the possibility of the suggestion that the member has made.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I would be prepared to leave the matter with the Minister if I can be assured that there will be some immediate examination of this possibility, because I know that the citizens of that area and all the people who use that road regularly commuting to Brandon and through traffic — and I guess the through traffic particularly is the traffic that we have to worry about because of the traffic that's changing speed. As Alexander grows to a bedroom community for Brandon, there's a lot of traffic that's changing speed in that curve area, and this is providing a real traffic hazard. I think that everybody in that area would appreciate some immediate attention to this problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 71.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 71: Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty, a sum not exceeding \$25,425,000 for Highways—pass.

Committee rise and report. Committee rise.

ESTIMATES — CONSUMER, CORPORATE AND INTERNAL SERVICES

MR. CHAIRMAN, Mr. William Jenkins (Logan): I refer honourable members to Page 14.

(The remainder of Resolution 32 and Resolutions 33 and 34 were read and passed.)

Resolution 35, Public Information Services, (a) Salaries, \$274,500. The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, I hope that I am on the right item here. Is this Public Information Services the area where the government is advertising the different — on media and television and radio and in the press — does the advertising regarding the government programs that are being carried on? The example I will give is rebate system advertising, this type of thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

MR. TOUPIN: No, Mr. Chairman, that would be under U(d).

MR. F. JOHNSTON: Could the Minister tell me what this Public Information Service is then? Just briefly, Mr. Chairman.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, the item before us is Public Information Services generally and we are talking of 16.17 staff man years which is no increase over last year. The increase in the amounts that we are talking about is all due, really, that is, \$18,500 to annual increment and negotiated general salary increases. There is a \$3,200 increase due to a general increase in the cost of offset — of ,200 offset by 6,000 economy and printing news releases on both sides of the same paper.

This is the Information Services where press releases are prepared for departments but it has nothing to do with, say, advertising for programs of departments of government. That is where my director indicated that that would be under I(b). I can read the summation of the responsibility of this area if the honourable member would so desire. It is quite extensive and it was contained within the report I tabled in the House.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: I would ask the Minister if he would because I read this when it says, "Numerous government programs, policies" — and I must smile, Mr. Chairman — "and achievements." I don't know what the achievements of the government is but I would certainly like to hear them from the Minister if I could.

MR. TOUPIN: Okay, Mr. Chairman. The Information Services Branch functions as the central news and information agency of the Manitoba government, preparing and distributing factual information about policies, programs and activities of the Provincial Government and various agencies, boards and commissions for the news media and the public.

News and information production and dissemination is carried out by a small staff consisting of a director, news editor, radio editor, television editor, and three information writers; all of whom write for the purpose of information gotten from departments of government, news releases and special writing assignments and handle direct requests for information from the public. The compact administrative writing staff is supported by two clerical persons and a television technician.

Also attached to the branch is the government photographic section which handles the visual communication requirements of all departments for publication, instructional and record purposes, including a photographic record, for court purposes, of fires investigated by the Fire Commissioner's Office. This section has an establishment of three photographers, two of which were filled in 1976, including that of a chief photographer together with a photo librarian and two photo laboratory technicians.

The branch has responsibility for the province's Citizens Inquiry Services which we talked about, I believe, at the opening of the Estimates of this department, CIS, which was launched in 1972 as a government telephone information and inquiry centre. CIS employs six university students on a one-year "working bursary" basis.

While the branch is perhaps best known for its news services which is used as an information source by libraries and individuals on its mailing list, in addition to newspapers, radio and television stations, about 40 percent of the branch activity is devoted to other functions involving, in the main, direct requests for information from the public.

The News Service⁴ The principal function is to keep citizens informed by using established news outlets, through provision of written news releases, feature and photo material to wire services and publications; provision of taped material to the radio stations and provision of filmed and video-taped material to TV stations. In 1976 an average of 31 news releases were issued each week, 1,633 for the year. In addition to releases on a daily basis, the week's production is compiled into information packages which are mailed out each Friday to the weekly newspapers and a variety of other news media in Manitoba and across Canada, and to organizations, municipalities, libraries and individuals placed on the mailing list on request. Special articles were prepared for publications with specific interests such as financial journals, construction and transportation publications, special supplements and the like.

The Radio News Service: This service provides regular and special taped material to radio

stations throughout the province. An automatic distribution system is available for radio stations outside Winnipeg which allows them to seek information at their convenience. During 1976, 586 radio tapes and radio news reports were provided.

Television News Service: This service provides videotaped news and public affairs packages which are available to local TV stations as back-up to their own programming, to cable TV outlets as complete programs and to out-of-Winnipeg V stations to supplement their local news and public affairs programming on a delay basis.

During 1976 this section has videotaped and distributed in unedited form a total of 26 news conferences or other major events in the Legislative Building. In addition the year's production included: seven short news features on a variety of topics, two commercials, four half-hour features for the department of Agriculture, two pilot programs for the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and the recording of seminars on housing and consumerism.

The service operates basically as a three-man production unit headed by the television editor of the Information Services Branch with a production assistant and a TV broadcast technician. Other technical and production personnel necessary to a particular project are usually drawn from other departmental communications branches. The production unit is based in the Legislative Building but it is equipped with a van for mobile operation.

Photography Services: During 1976, the photo section handled 2,338 requests for photographic services from various government departments and agencies. Total number of prints made as a result of these assignments were 39,037. Some 8,436 35mm colour slides were also made. As well the section copied 2,936 pictures, principally for the Provincial Archives. In the course of the year 0,570 negatives and 69 colour transparencies were added to the photographic library.

Individual Information Requests: Information Services handled 612 letters of inquiry in 1976. These were mainly from school and university teachers and students seeking a wide variety of information on Manitoba and on various aspects of Provincial Government policies and programs.

Citizens Inquiry Service: The government's central toll-free inquiry centre handled about 42,000 calls during the past year. Callers were seeking information on the programs of all government departments and agencies, advice on access to government and location of specific members of the civil service.

CIS undertook a number of phone surveys on behalf of government agencies on a province-wide or limited area basis.

Cataloguing of all provincial government pamphlets and publications available to the public without cost continued. This service will provide a comprehensive print reference system for the first time.

Publications Production: The branch publishes "Manitoba Facts" on an annual basis. This booklet provides a summary of the province in such areas as history, government, the economy, communications, transportation, resources and recreation. The Branch also provided assistance or assumed responsibility for publication on behalf of a number of government departments.

Other Functions: The branch arranges for a number of special events such as sod-turnings and official openings including the new Woodsworth Building in Winnipeg. It handled the design and other arrangements for a general government display which visited small fairs and exhibitions at a number of points during the past season. The display was staffed by the Citizens Inquiry Service. It provided Manitoba representation on the Souris River Basin Study Public Involvement Program on an ongoing basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 35(a). The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, I thank him for that rundown. As a matter of fact, it sounds like a very busy bunch. Do the other departments of government, like the public information that you spoke of, and I go back to what you were reading when you said that they did all these publications for other departments of government, in other words, the releases I receive from the Department of Agriculture come through this department?

MR. TOUPIN: No, Mr. Chairman. In most cases they do their own unless it is a policy statement where, say, an Order-in-Council has passed or a regulation is adopted by Cabinet. In those cases Information Services would be asked to prepare a press release. I am informed by my director that in regard to their pamphlets, their information documents, they do their own.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: Ten the news service that I receive is not done by this department here.

MR. TOUPIN: The news services itself is done by this office, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 35(a). The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MR. AXWORTHY: Mr. Chairman, I just have one complaint to raise about the way in which the Information News Service operates and that is that it seems that MLAs are often the last people to know when something is happening in their own constituency and that too often, that we've been informed by way of press media, news releases that are usually three or four days in advance that there is going to be an opening of a MHRC building in our area. In a particular case where there was a real problem was when the Inner City Employment Project was announced and no information was

available to MLAs until several days after and there was a number of enquiries and I really had to phone around to find out what it was all about. It seems to me while I am not so naive to assume that the Information Service is totally untainted by some political interest — government wouldn't be government without it — it would seem that in certain areas there is a requirement to ensure that where there are specific programs that are affecting a direct constituency that it would be of some courtesy at least to ensure that the MLAs who at least theoretically, are supposed to be the intermediate between government and people would at least have knowledge on the same day or about the same time. —(Interjection)— No, the federal government usually has its materials stole by the provincial government and announced three or four days earlier.

It is simply something that could raise with the Minister because on two or three occasions in the past while I know that that has occurred and while I recognize the motive for it, I don't particularly think that it is the appropriate way to conduct a department which is a civil service department. It does look at times that there is a miscue, let's put it down to that, simply that the timing could be more appropriate for MLAs to know before everyone — after — that's really what it works out, almost after everyone else does and therefore are often not in a position to provide their own responsibilities in ensuring that people find out what is going on.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, that last comment is certainly well taken in the sense that I have had this complaint presented to me before, not only by members on that side of the House but members on this side of the House, and not by Cabinet Ministers because usually we are aware of what is accepted, rejected or modified in Cabinet, but for Orders in Council authorizing expenditure of funds for the construction, say, of housing in MHRC, it takes a little while for MLAs that are not in Cabinet to sometimes find out.

So I believe that we'll look at the subject matter and the criticism and see what can be done to inform the elected representatives quicker than it is possible now. I think of treating people like I would like to be treated myself and when I land on that side of the House in 1990, I would like to be able to know quicker than the honourable member now finds out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Brandon West.

MR. EDWARD MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to address a few remarks to the Minister in connection with the news service, that bulletin that comes to us in the mail. I wonder, first of all, I understand it to be a news service, that is, it is reporting factual information to those people who are on its mailing list, what method is undertaken by the publishers of this news service to ensure that the reports that they receive from departments of government that are given to them as news are factual? Do they just automatically accept everything that comes from any department of government as presented to them as being newsworthy, or do they make any effort, through their bureau, to check these facts before they are issued in the form of a news service bulletin?

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, I'm informed again by the Director that this is checked and rechecked with the department. But again, if I, as a Minister, decide to put out a press release without consulting with Mr. Smith and his staff, they can't be blamed for, say, information that is not considered to be factual later on, and that's always possible.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, then if the Bureau finds subsequently that some information they have published as factual turns out to be in error, does the news service take any steps to correct that information by sending out a correcting bulletin to say, what we told you in bulletin so-and-so of such-and-such a date was in fact in error and we wish now to correct the record?

MR. TOUPIN: I am told that they always do.

MR. MCGILL: Not too recently, but during the period of the last three or four years, bulletins came out in relation to the activities of Saunders Aircraft, particularly from the Department of Industry and Commerce I guess, and they publicized certain sales figures of units sold to various airlines in the United States which turned out subsequently to be completely in error, not based on fact at all. But I fail to recall any correction that was ever published for those particular news bulletins. Can the Minister comment on that?

MR. TOUPIN: I'm informed, Mr. Chairman, that the said releases were not published by Information Services, not prepared by Information Services and not released by Information Services in regard to Saunders. There are two possible sources that the releases could have been authorized by. One is Industry and Commerce, the other would be the Minister responsible for the MDC, the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources.

MR. MCGILL: Well, then, Mr. Chairman, let me again ask the Minister to confirm that all the information they receive from various departments of government is 'checked and rechecked?' Did you not tell us a moment ago that such information, whether you received it from Industry and Commerce or MDC or whatever, that your Bureau would take its own steps to ensure that was factual information?

MR. TOUPIN: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, if it's a question of having releases prepared and released by Information Services, yes, that statement I made awhile ago stands, that it's checked and double-checked. But if I, as a Minister, responsible for Consumer, Corporate and Internal Services,

or Co-operative Development, or MTS, makes a statement and I don't give the bare bones to Information Services to prepare a release, then I can't hold them responsible. What I'm being told here in regard to Saunders, that they did not prepare the statements, so they would not be responsible for the content.

MR. MCGILL: Well then the Minister, whether it be the Minister of Industry and Commerce or some other department, did make those statements on behalf of Saunders and it would then be, I understand it, the responsibility of that Minister to inform the Bureau that an error had been made and a correction then issued?

MR. TOUPIN: No, Mr. Chairman, it would not be the responsibility of the Minister to ask the Bureau, in my understanding, and I would ask Mr. Smith to correct me if I am wrong, for them to make a correction of a statement that was prepared and issued by a given department, whether that be Industry or my own department, but for the department to make the correction, like I've done on cases. Or I've asked papers to make corrections of statements that they've actually printed, that were wrong. But Information Services would not, in a case where a department issues a press release with a mistake, ask Information Services to have that mistake corrected that they have not taken the responsibility to prepare and issue the statement.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that I understand that explanation completely, but I think it would add to the stature and the credibility of the Bureau if statements that have been made are subsequently proven to be incorrect, that some correction be issued. Otherwise, there is apt to be a somewhat downgrading of the whole effort and the authenticity of the reporting of this new service.

One other point, Mr. Chairman, the Member from Fort Rouge, I believe, commented on the editorializing that creeps into these factual reports and as he pointed out, perhaps this cannot be eliminated entirely, but it seems to me that certain departments manage to include more editorializing in their information bulletins than others. Again, I recall one from the Industry and Commerce Department relating to certain strides that had been made in the seed business in their relations with Mexico, all of which subsequently proved to be completely without foundation.

I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if the Minister can indicate whether or not he has taken any steps to try to prevent that kind of editorializing almost to the point of misinformation from creeping into this service? I think the service would do a much better job if it did attempt to do some careful screening of the kind of reports that are coming into it.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, I would love to be able to do what the honourable member is suggesting, but unfortunately there is no way that I, as the Minister responsible for this Bureau, force that upon the Free Press, the Tribune, any weeklies. If we, or any department decides to put out a press release as factual as possible in regard to the given policy or the program in question, there's no way that we can even insist that the radio station, the television in question, or the newspaper, just take a part of that release. No more so can I force my views upon my colleagues that want to issue their own private press releases without using the services of Information Services, and that happens.

If I'm caught in the hallway, as an example, and we've happened to decide on a policy of government, I may talk about the policy of government and without issuing a formal press release and sometimes the Bureau is faulted for this. Well they should not be faulted for releases that they haven't prepared and taken responsibility to issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, it would sound to me that the department receives — now I don't want to use the word "press release" here, Mr. Chairman — but news releases from different departments of government and it's their responsibility to see that the news release is carried to the people or the media, wherever it's being mailed to. The Minister is I think, quite right in saying that he can't control his colleagues and the other Ministers in the departments, but certainly there must be some sort of system whereby a news release comes from a department, that some checking is done. I would say this only on the basis that as the Minister in Consumer and Corporate Affairs would not like to see things going out to the public that are not accurate and very very well checked beforehand, — the Minister has basically that responsibility within his portfolio, to even be a little bit of a policeman with the rest of his colleagues, if necessary, because he is the policeman to the other people in this province who make releases and do false advertising or something of that nature. Has he not got any control of that particular system, or maybe put it another way, do you have any way to rap their knuckles?

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, we were doing very well until the Member for Morris got in the House. I hope it doesn't hinder the activities as they were going now.

First of all, let's put it this way, by all means the statement that I made pertaining to checking and double-checking information submitted to the Bureau by other departments or agencies of government is being done on a regular basis. I'm willing to be somewhat of a police person, but I can't be a dictator. I can't dictate my views or the views of the Bureau on my colleagues and I think that's part of democracy in a sense, that if a Minister decides to make a statement on his own without

utilizing the services of Information Services, that's his right.

I happen to have used Information Services, I'd say, 75 percent of the time in the last eight years. I do have sometimes difficulty in controlling myself; I happen to agree with the Member for Morris, but I try at least and it's not always easy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 35(a). The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: One more question on the rundown. You mentioned the production unit is in the building here and you mentioned a van. Is the operation of that van in the expenditures of this amount or is it operated by Public Works or something?

MR. TOUPIN: The vehicle is owned by Public Works. The operation of same is contained within the Estimates before us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

MR. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the Minister could inform the House whether this particular branch owns some television taping equipment?

MR. TOUPIN: Yes, it does.

MR. BANMAN: I wonder if the Minister could inform the House as to whether it's being used, and what it is being used for?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister, I believe, has already answered that in his outline. That has already been given, before he introduced this department. I would suggest to the honourable member that he read Hansard.

MR. TOUPIN: Yes, I gave an initial statement, opening remarks that is, on this section which contained the answer to the question that the honourable member posed of me now pertaining to VTR equipment and related expenditures.

MR. BANMAN: I appreciate those comments, Mr. Chairman, but the problem is that we are running two committees and it's pretty hard to be in both of them so when there's a duplicate such as has happened now, it's pretty hard for some of the members to catch everything. I wonder if the Minister in his opening remarks mentioned whether it will be the government's intention to start making their own news releases, in other words, in television form or even can them for radio stations.

MR. TOUPIN: That's been the case, I'm informed, since about 1968, to some degree more or less. So, yes, that is being done and that was part of the remarks that I made awhile ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MR. AXWORTHY: Mr. Chairman, the remarks of the Member for La Verendrye provide me with another series of questions that I think we should at least catch up on. That is, is there any intention of the Information Services to proceed with broadcasting in any of the sessions of this particular Chamber? I believe that there was a certain licence given by the Rules and Privileges Committee about three or four years back.

There was a time, I think, when I asked the question a couple of years ago if there was any intention, the then Minister indicated that it was perhaps for reason of cost, it seems to me that since that time new equipment has been added to the department giving it the capacity. I notice that there have been occasions when budget speeches, which are usually premier solo performances by a senior member of the government and not by others, have been recorded. I'm wondering if there has been any examination of the feasibility of doing either radio or television broadcasts of portions of the proceedings. I know that it may not compete with Charlie's Angels or something as a high-rating program, considering the directions that we are going into — the Federal House has gone into — where they are beginning to undertake experiments in this area, I wonder whether the Minister has any further plans to bring forward to this House about what might be done, broadcasting our own sessions?

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, radio coverage is already being done and available. TV coverage, I'm informed, was discussed at the committee level of the House and rejected. That doesn't mean that the type of equipment that we have today would be able to do the service, that we would have to modify our new equipment, I'm informed.

MR. AXWORTHY: Mr. Chairman, in response to the Minister, I'm aware that there is a capacity for feeding sound out of the Chamber, but it's usually limited to taking cuts for short news spots by media people. I'm wondering if there have been any arrangements or discussions held with, say, the community radio station which is now available through the University of Manitoba services or other groups that might be interested in covering on-going sessions during the afternoon or the evening periods for a certain hour or so or when there are particularly important debates being carried out, whether any discussions like that have been held. Even providing fuller information through television taping, has that on the community channel system, been discussed or negotiated?

Again, I would be interested in knowing, when the Minister says that we don't have appropriate equipment, I've seen some of the taping equipment that has been available at conferences. It seems to me that what would be necessary in order to provide for that kind of coverage, and it would be

possible to work other arrangements, common feed systems which I gather is going to be the way they'll be operating in the Ottawa House and which I believe they operate in Alberta where the television networks have a common feed or a common system that they have helped supply and that they can carry at longer terms.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The question that the honourable member raises is one that is dealt with by the Rules Committee of this House and it is my understanding that it is open for the television media to take advantage of it and they have not taken up that option to this time. The Honourable Minister.

MR. TOUPIN: Again, Mr. Chairman, you are quite correct in pointing out that this is usually discussed, and in most cases discussed by the House Rules Committee. The equipment, in regard to jacks and that, is there. Radio stations, I guess university students who would want to plug into the jacks, that's available to them. We don't have the equipment available for them pertaining to cassette equipment and all that, but they could bring their own. That is now being done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 35(a). The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I wondered if the question was asked, what is the total cost to date of the television equipment? I noticed several years ago there was some VTR equipment purchased. I wonder if there is any total cost to date of all the equipment that has been purchased to make that type of thing available.

MR. TOUPIN: The VTR equipment, Mr. Chairman, purchased some two years ago at a cost of \$165,000, is the same equipment we are now making use of.

MR. WILSON: Could the Minister give some examples as to how they are making use of this \$165,000 equipment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. That has already been outlined by the Minister in his opening statement of this department. I would suggest the honourable member read it in Hansard. The Honourable Member for Swan River.

MR. BILTON: Mr. Chairman, I've been at the other Committee meeting and if I'm repetitious, Mr. Chairman, I would hope you would bring me to order. This Information Services . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . back to the remark that the honourable member made.

MR. BILTON: I said that I was in the other committee meeting, Mr. Chairman, and if I was repetitious, I would hope you would bring me to order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BILTON: This Information Service, I would like to make a few enquiries of the Minister if I may. Is that the professor? They're my meat, those boys. This News and Information Production that the Minister spoke of in his Annual Report, this takes care of these weekly publications. He goes on to tell us, Mr. Chairman, that he has a Director, a News Editor, a Radio Editor, a Television Editor and three Information Writers.

In another part of his report, Mr. Chairman, he tells us that there are 31 newsletters a week published by these people. I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that these news releases, in the beginning, come from the department themselves in their general setup, for the information. I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, there is a tremendous waste of money here. These people are nothing more than rewriters. Why do you have to have a staff of this magnitude for a propaganda service because that's all it is.

Then we come to the photographic section, I believe that's under this particular item — visual communication requirements, departments for publication, instructional and record purposes including photographic records, court purposes, fires investigated by the Fire Commissioner's Office, this section has an establishment of three photographers, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was all covered in the statement that the Honourable Minister gave at the opening of his remarks in this department.

MR. BILTON: I take it that it was from these remarks, Mr. Chairman. I'm asking why, if I may, that he has to have two more photographers on staff, what is he building up — another empire? Two more were taken on in 1976, and I'd like the Minister to tell me why two more photographers were required for a total of three.

MR. TOUPIN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I can reread the comments that I made awhile ago when we started this appropriation but apart from making mention of what is contained within the Annual Report, I did indicate the reasons why — there is no new staff involved here. In the report there was an indication of filling of two positions but I'm talking about the Estimates for 1977-78, we are staying at the same staff complement. The increase that we are talking about, I believe I indicated awhile ago, if I haven't I'd ask someone to tell me and I'll repeat what I think I gave to the House in regards to the slight increase in this appropriation. There is no additional staff and I did spell out what the photographers, the writers and so on are doing within Information Services.

I can't speak for all departments naturally, but I can speak for my own, say three, four areas now, and say that if it is a question of referring an item to Information Services for writing . . . As an example; there is an item on Cabinet tomorrow, I may want a press release prepared on that. If I don't

intend to prepare it myself and issue it myself, I'll ask Information Services to do it, but if I'm going to do it, *ad lib* or whatever, I won't bother going to Information Services and asking them to prepare it. So you know, I'm relating what is being done in my regards — that doesn't mean that I have always used Information Services in the last eight years but I have used them on a regular basis, that is why they are being paid, to help departments and agencies of the Crown relate to the public the type of information that is being done by policy decision. So I don't really see any duplication, if there are duplications I would like to know — if there's any fat to be cut, let's cut it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Swan River.

MR. BILTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I suggest to the Minister that a director a news editor, a radio editor, and a television editor is really going a little bit too far, I think that fat is getting a little thick. We were given to understand that the government endeavoured to cut everything to the bone. This is not evidence of cutting anything to the bone, the Minister knows as well as I do, he's probably got a larger staff than the Winnipeg Tribune, that is at the top, at the top, and 95 percent of the material is coming from the department anyway. I suggest to the Minister that this is nothing but a great big bunch of fat that he could cut out and cut out without hurting anybody.

I want to ask the Minister, "Manitoba Moods," does that come under this item? —(Interjection)— A terrific magazine! The biggest waste of money in the entire appropriation that we have been dealing with. Why you could have a professional photographers on the staff to create that nonsense is beyond my wildest dreams — printed on the finest and most expensive material that can be bought, and I'd like to know what that costs and how many copies you send out every quarter?

MR. TOUPIN: Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all there's. . . I wish the Honourable Member for Morris would either stand up and make a statement or. . . —(Interjection)— once I'm finished, yes' once I sit down. I don't agree with the Honourable Member for Swan River that there is too much fat in this area — we have the same staff as was in 1968 in Information Services. There has been a changing of responsibility of staff, that I can vouch because there has been new programs in a sense or new services offered. "Manitoba Moods" is something that you will have the honour to discuss when we get to the Estimates of my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. I would rather not make comments on it myself — that's for him to either defend or curtail or alter, do whatever.

The news releases, Mr. Chairman, that we talked about represent approximately 40 percent of the work of the bureau. The branch handles policy statements at the request of Ministers or Crown corporations —(Interjection)— No, no they don't copy my policy statements. If I ask the Information Services to prepare a release on a policy, decided say by Cabinet as an example, they will prepare a policy statement which is not necessarily the finite details that you see on the Order-In-Council as an example. So that is prepared by them in most cases but again, Ministers sometimes do that by themselves without asking Information Services. The departments in question write news releases on ongoing government programs like we indicated a while ago, Agriculture. If we talk of most of their pamphlets, they do those themselves, they don't get Information Services to do them.

MR. BILTON: Mr. Chairman, did I hear the Minister right when he said that those people that I referred to a little earlier write policy statements for the Cabinet? Is this true? Mr. Chairman, I challenge the Minister on that — surely this can't be true. Where are the Deputy Ministers, the back-up men, the men that are in the firing line, the career politicians — not politicians but rather civil servants, I stay with the civil servants, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that those gentlemen, and those ladies, whoever they may be are the people that are close to the Ministers and should foster and write those statements; not the director, the news editor, the radio editor, the television editor are writing policy statements for the people of Manitoba. Mr. Minister, please retract that statement in order to regain, if you've got any confidence of the people of Manitoba, don't tell us that these jokers are writing policy statements in the government and guidance of our people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. I don't think that calling members of the Civil Service jokers is something that can be condoned in this House.

MR. BILTON: I withdraw that statement, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. If the Honourable Leader of the Opposition wishes to make a speech, I'll recognize him in due turn. The Honourable Member for. . . —(Interjection)— fine, thank you. Order please, I'm not hear to engage in debate with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition so then just keep quiet until you are recognized —(Interjection)— then go and do it somewhere else.

The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek. Order please, I think I know my job as well as the Honourable Leader knows his job. The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek. The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I did want to try to familiarize myself with some aspects of it, and I apologize for asking questions that the Minister may have asked before but I was attending a conference. . . because the Minister of Tourism wasn't there, I thought that this government should be represented so I was at another conference. I covered up for him.

However, I did want to ask the Minister, I noticed the year before there was 33,000 pictures taken

and this year there is almost 40,000 — 39,037. Are these pictures the type that when we attend a function, say a Lieutenant-Governor's function or that, that the photographer runs around and takes pictures of the Members of the Government? Are these pictures that are in a library that could be viewed and possibly borrowed by the public or borrowed by the Opposition? Are these pictures available for magazines like the "Manitoba Moods"; would a member of that particular photographic division take a picture of these hundred-odd snakes for this picture in the last edition? Is this the type of photographic work these people do and if so, I'm talking. . . this is serious because when doing the City of Winnipeg the Mayor's office never threw away any pictures, any pictures that were taken were catalogued and kept and a member could borrow them for, you know, if there was a tremendous shot of the Legislative Buildings, he could borrow them for whatever purposes and return them if he was an elected representative regardless of the party he belonged to. I wondered are these pictures available to Members of the House, do Members of the Government use them for their election pamphlets? These are questions that I would like to familiarize myself with because if you are taking an average of 35,000 pictures a year, are you cataloging them, are you saving them for the archives — what are you doing with all these pictures that you are taking every year? I think this is an interesting thought here. These pictures cost the taxpayers a lot of money. Who is making use of them? Are they kept on a catalogue basis so we can go back and capture a picture from five years ago to maybe use in an update pamphlet?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, I repeat and hopefully clarify for the Member for Swan River that in regard to statements of policy intent let's say, and I cite as an example of an Order-In-Council say passed by Cabinet pertaining to Consumer Affairs. The Order-In-Council contains let's say as an example, the proclamation of consumer protection legislation, Information Services would be asked to prepare a release stating what the proclamation of the Act meant to the general public, that's the type of. . . it's not a question of formulating for government a policy, but once the policy is formulated, once the Act is proclaimed, information sees it's impossible for every Minister to know all the newspapers in the province, all the radio stations, television broadcasting systems in the province that would like to have the release in question so they do that.

In regard to questions posed of me by the Member for Wolseley: Most of the photographs in question are for the Archives. Yes they are for of our photographs are catalogued.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. TOUPIN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I forgot to. . . well to repeat because I answered a while ago that Manitoba Moods is not a creation of this section' "Manitoba Moods" is a creation published by the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. WILSON: Well just to continue along those lines, I notice that up until this year there used to be elaborate yearly reports put out and there always seemed to be a fairly recent portrait of the individual Ministers together with a lot of very detailed photography. Would this be the section under which these pictures would be taken which would be for the Annual Reports and of course then on to the archives or are these under the individual department?

MR. TOUPIN: That would all be part of it. In regard to individual departments, Crown corporations, it's all done by Information Services and catalogued by them.

MR. WILSON: My last question would be then: If these pictures are taken at government expense, would the Minister indicate in his view, is this particular department non-political or is it there to present the government's views and government's pictures? I mean is this department set up to be non-political or is it to express the views of the Ministers on the other side and project a pro-government image or is it supposed to be non-political and simply take pictures of facts and of interest to the people of Manitoba?

MR. TOUPIN: Well again, if we go back to the creation of this section of the department, and it goes back a few years, and I did indicate a while ago that the staff complement remains the same as it was in 1968, that by all means without wanting to, say' call programs New Democratic programs, and since it is answering services or desires, in a sense, of departments of government, agencies of government, that it has the responsibility of relating to the public information that is formulated and decided by the government in power so naturally you would see more photographs of Ministers than you would of Opposition members but that is all part of any government in Canada.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Swan River.

MR. BILTON: Mr. Chairman, through you I would like to thank the Minister for his reply to my questions. He said that these people that I referred to earlier, the director, the news editor, the radio editor and the television editor, and the information writers, he said that on the one hand they elaborated on Acts on the one hand and Orders-In-Council on the other — they developed them into information pieces that were distributed throughout the province to the news media, and so on.

May I suggest through you, Mr. Chairman, that there is a big difference between the Acts and the Orders-In-Council. The Orders-in-Council to my knowledge are something spontaneous decided

upon by the Cabinet itself but the Acts that he is telling us that these people relate and explain to the people, I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, are the responsibility of the Deputies under the immediate instruction of the Minister by the fact that in the first instance, the Deputies, in my humble opinion recommended the contents of those various Acts to the Minister himself. It would seem to me that it would be for the Deputy Ministers to prepare the material for public information for release by the Minister rather than those people I just outlined to you a moment ago, the director, the news editor, and so on and so forth, etc. Something is wrong here if those people are explaining government policy on behalf of the Minister and ignoring the proper civil servants that are there for the job and understand what it is all about. I am suggesting that the Acts themselves, the Minister may have erred in his explanation, but the Acts themselves, I feel should come over the hand of the Deputy Minister to the Minister rather than these people handling them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. TOUPIN: Well I guess we do have a slight difference of opinion here, Mr. Chairman, in regard to information to the public. I don't see it as a responsibility of a Deputy Minister, an ADM or a Director to inform the public of changes of laws whether they be Acts of the Legislative Assembly, Regulations or Policies of a given department. I see that as a responsibility of the Minister, the responsibility of the Minister to see that changes do occur whether they be by means of an Order-in-Council, by means of an amendment to the Bill in the House, I see that as the responsibility of the Minister to have that change occur. But once the Act is proclaimed or given Royal Assent, I see a role for a Bureau such as this one in regard to making that information available to the consumers, to the general public.

We talked about a bill introduced by the Department of Highways pertaining to mopeds as an example. How else would the general public know what is actually being done in regard to the Highway Traffic Act without having some type of distribution of information by means of an office such as this one. I see first of all, the responsibility of a Minister in regard to policy, I see the responsibility of a Deputy Minister and down the line in regard to the administration of Acts, of regulations, of policies, of intents of the Minister and government, that is the responsibility of a Deputy Minister. I for one try not to get involved to a great deal in regard to administrative matters, I try to stay at the policy level. Some Ministers get more involved at the administrative level.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to box the Minister's ears or maybe I was being misinformed but I wonder, the Minister said the staff complement had stayed the same but I look at Public Accounts '75 and Public Accounts '76, I do some simple arithmetic and I find the staff complement was thirteen last year and it was sixteen last year. I also notice that the salaries of the number one man have jumped from \$27,000 to over \$30,000 and the others salaries of the number two and number three man have jumped from \$18,000 to over \$20,000, and I'm wondering if the importance of the message that these people are giving to the consumers, and I for one agree with the Minister, that consumers must know, but I'm just wondering if the Minister could explain the importance of their positions that just disseminating information would call for a \$30,000 plus salary. I also am concerned about the fact that I have noticed many of the Ministers are not using this service, and I would urge the Minister to go to his Cabinet and demand that the Minister stop swallowing so many vitamin "I" pills and handing their own members their own public relations people, their own writers. If we have this Information Service department we don't need each particular Cabinet Minister having his own little information bureaucracy being set up and I'm all for keeping it in the one section here because certainly with these kind of salaries we need the information to go to the consumers, and these gentlemen obviously if they are getting this kind of money must be qualified.

MR. TOUPIN: Well I hate to use this type of language especially in the House but the Honourable Member for Wolseley is calling my informer a liar. I have been informed that there was no staff increase in this section of the department since 1968. I'll bring the honourable member a chart of the staff complement in 1968 right up until 1976 inclusively. The amount sought for 1977-78 is no increase, we are not asking for any additional staff.

The honourable member well knows that back in 1968 he and I probably made less money than we are today, if we didn't we are in trouble. So naturally those that were hired back in 1968 would be making a few dollars more than they were back in 1968. That's normal especially if they are doing an acceptable job, they should be rewarded for that. There are scales and there is a Union that you have to negotiate with, and you just don't decide that you are going to do away with an employee that is satisfactory. You know, if the honourable member is asking me to give him the comparison of staff complement from 1968 to 1976 inclusive, I don't have that before me but I'll get it for him. I am informed again, I state on the record that there is no increase since 1968.

MR. WILSON: Just so that I can put it on the record, Mr. Chairman, Page 27 of the Public Accounts 1975, and Page 33 of Public Accounts 1976 indicate 13 in 1975 and 16 in 1976. I'm sorry this is a government document possibly printed by the Queen's Printer under the Minister's control, I'm only

going by what I'm reading in front of me.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, we are talking of the section before us, of public information services, and that be the section under Public Accounts. You know it is possible for either to have made a mistake, we can check, but I committed to the honourable member that I'll bring him a comparative chart of every year since 1968.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution 35(a)—pass; 35(b) Other Expenditures \$131,600—pass; Resolution 35: Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$406,100 for Consumer Corporate and Internal Services—pass.

Resolution 36, Telecommunications Development Branch (a) Salaries \$60,700. The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I see there has been sort of a hold the line on the salary thing so we'll get the Minister to explain that but because this is a sort of policy item, I wonder. . . the Minister before your taking over this department had indicated some improvement in the policy area of improved television service to tourism areas in the Province of Manitoba, and I just left a conference which indicated the amount of lost business that is caused by the single lines that are going into our resort areas and the first thing the operators now ask when somebody phones if they finally get through is, what is your name and telephone number because they know the line might go dead in many many instances and the lines are certainly overloaded. Is there any policy research being done in improvements to the tourist areas of the province pertaining to telephone service?

The other is the Minister before yourself indicated that he was on a power trip trying to get microwave cablevision outlets to as many as the rural areas as possible to carry the government message to the people prior to the upcoming election. I wonder if the Minister could indicate if he is intending to have these public cablevision stations available to the rural communities prior to the coming election?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. TOUPIN: Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, there is a staff decrease for the upcoming year which is as a result of the budgetary restrictions. The honourable member is talking about telephone services in the. . . well in general in the province including tourist areas. That is a responsibility of the Manitoba Telephone System and not of telecommunications here. Cablevision services is an area where we offer hardware services by means of the Manitoba Telephone System to groups interested in offering that service. That could include companies, that could include groups of individuals like co-operatives and what not. It's a service of equipment by the Manitoba Telephone System. We did have an *expose* of that subject matter in committee when the telephone system was before committee. accept the statement of the Honourable Member for Wolseley who is being somewhat political, that my predecessor was on an ego trip or building an empire. I don't believe that he or I need to attempt to create an empire in any department of government.

MR. WILSON: Well in this area, it's a development branch, and if we're talking about the development of a microwave system throughout the province my understanding was that in the literature that was mailed out they were looking at a public information network to carry the message that the public information services may be doing on a smaller scale in the item before us. Can the Minister indicate what the citizens of Manitoba can expect pertaining to the government involvement in carrying their message over the cablevision or public service networks; is there any indication you intend to have an information service under your own responsibility that is going to be. . . for instance that kit you talked about, you talked about having half hour programs or whatever to explain this kit that you have, you know the one, Me and My Shadow and On the Dotted Line — you were going to have these educational type programs beamed out supposedly to these communities that would have cablevision because I understand there will be a particular channel open to the government for public information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MR. AXWORTHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to raise with the Minister several issues related to this branch of his department. I do with some nostalgia because his predecessor and I spent many warm hours together working over this question of the communications policy the province has been establishing for the past three or four years. I think, Mr. Chairman, that we have taken a certain turn for the worse, if I can use a medical analogy because I think that the original intentions that were set forward in the communications White Paper in 1973 I believe or 1974 perhaps, have been sadly frustrated. I think that the government has allowed the development of the cable system to really get out from beyond its control, that no longer has an accountable system according to the guidelines set forward in that white paper.

What disturbs me in particular, Mr. Chairman, is that with the newly signed agreement with the Federal Government whereby the Manitoba Telephone System now has the right to handle the hardware and leasing of all the parts of the system, leaving to the CRTC the program content, the assumption upon which that agreement was signed, that the Manitoba Telephone System would be prepared to present itself before the Public Utilities Board has not been fulfilled, and as a result what

we now have is that there is no one really deciding communications policy for this province other than the Manitoba Telephone System because of its control over the hardware and MTS is reporting to no one other than it may show up to the Premier in the privacy of his room but certainly, there seems to be no where in which those who are involved in the development of the cable system who are having to lease the equipment from MTS which is a total monopoly situation, or the public are able to acquire any rationale for rates, any rationale for uses other than what they are told and have to accept on faith by the telephone system.

Mr. Chairman, this runs totally contrary to the principles set forward in that communications white paper as I read it and have read the interpretations that have been expressed to me in past years by the Minister responsible for this division. What really we have now is our assumption, at least mine on this side, that one of the primary responsibilities of this Branch Telecommunications Development was to set forward policy guidelines about the extension of telecommunications services, primarily cable' the extension of microwave services into northern posts, and furthermore that while Manitoba Telephone System would be the actual deliverer of that service, it would be this department that would provide a degree of monitoring, overview and through the Minister be able to report. That in particular on the question of rates and costs, the Public Utilities Board would ' be involved. Now that seems to have totally fallen through, and what I would really suggest that somewhere along the way, this particular branch of this department has been snookered and that the total control of the development of communications policy now rests in MTS, and it rests in MTS to a point where MTS does not have to report to any public body, really, concerning the kind of decisions being taken.

Mr. Chairman, I think that is a very serious turn because the agreement signed between the Federal Government and the Provincial Government is a very important milestone I think in communications policy in this province. That agreement is the first of its kind and therefore should be done properly and correctly. And the way it's being handled now I really fear is of serious concern if we are trying to establish that in a delicate sensitive area of communications the issue of accountability is a very important one. You can probably see it most clearly, Mr. Chairman, in the issue of revenue, that I came into possession, I guess, by way of the generosity of Manitoba Telephone System in its very large information package on CATV. Well what strikes me about this, Mr. Chairman, is that it almost makes no reference at all to the work done by the Department of Communications, the white paper that was presented and I would suggest that probably this new information package sets out a number of policy proposals, in fact on Page 1 you have six positions taken about what MTS is now going to on cable policy in the Province of Manitoba. I would really wonder first to begin with to what degree . was the Department of Telecommunications involved in the development of this cable policy, because this is a new cable policy, in effect. It really is, if you go through it, and read it, this is a new cable policy for the Province of Manitoba. I would certainly be interested in knowing to what degree was this a product of consultation and joint arrangement between Telecommunications Branch and the MTS, or whether in fact, was it something that was done arbitrarily and unilaterally by the Telephone System, without any consultation, by a branch which was supposed to setting policy guidelines.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, when you look at the question of how revenue is allocated, that under this particular program, MTS can pretty much charge the kind of rates that they want, — as much as I know about it, and I don't pretend to be a full expert on the communications system — what they're doing really runs contrary to the arrangements made with the CRTC in terms of cable operators, having to devote all those moneys which are not going to cover their costs or the rates set by the Utilities Board, or rates set for them back into communications. And yet the money is derived by the Manitoba Telephone System. They can charge 15 percent, or whatever it is, to lease a portion of that system . . . at a rate per subscriber per month if they operated on MTS revenues growing formerly, meaning that MTS can cream off the money and just put it back in the general revenues, to develop, I don't know, Princess, dial telephones, or to have fingers walking through the yellow pages, advertising, or whatever they want to do that has nothing to do with communications.

As a result, of all the revenue that should be derived from the leasing of this equipment that can be turned back in to further expansion of the system in rural areas, in northern areas, is not being used for this. It is not certainly being used for the development of different varieties of telecommunication programming — better stations, better community uses, and so forth. MTS simply takes the bill and runs.

Now the third aspect to it, which I am equally concerned about, and some members here from the northern constituencies should be, whether I perceive to be, are almost at a snail's pace in the extension of television broadcasting in northern communities. You have a situation where towns like Thompson are still doing broadcasts rather than getting their microwave units, and when you begin to ask the question "Why?" — if you identified it, it's a split jurisdiction, that the policy set forth by Telecommunications says one thing, and then they get into, I guess, having to go through a big rigmarole with the Department of Northern Affairs and MTS. But you find out the formula the MTS

has established for the extension of telecommunications means that to get CTV or CBC or something to come in, they are charged a fairly high rate for that microwave unit, even though they know they're going to be losing money once they set up the programming in there, and then they're going to be asked to set up studios and do everything else at a deficit. As a result, the broadcaster is going to be highly reluctant to put anything on the wire because he's going to be losing money all the way down the line.

It seems to me the whole microwave policy is again designed to add to the profit margin, or the profit ability of MTS, not to the extension of communications in rural and northern Manitoba. So all the way along the line, Mr. Chairman, I think we have had an increasing denial of the kinds of principles that this branch set forward in its own White Paper' which I happen to think was a pretty good piece of work and which I supported at the time — but since then, we've seen a gradual erosion of the position of this branch as the policy pacesetter and the gradual acquisition of the responsibility by MTS, and the problem there is who, really, is going to be deciding communications policy.

Now, I firmly believe that policy should be made in the ministerial department where the Minister is responsible to this House, and not by a Crown corporation. It's the same complaint I have about Manitoba Hydro. They shouldn't be making energy policy, it should be made by ministerial departments. The same thing is true in communications policy, and we're going down exactly the same route, allowing Crown corporations to begin making policy' and as a result we are removing it several distances from the accountability of the elected representatives or from government itself.

Mr. Chairman, that is the concern I really see in what is one of the most critical policy areas that we have. I don't think that there is anything probably of more concern in some ways than the use of communications policy in this province, because it affects so many people in so many ways. I think we're seeing it slip out from under our fingers and I'm concerned about it. I would really want to know from the Minister what he intends to do about that kind of erosion, and what he intends to do to rewrite the balance to ensure that communications policy is set in the department, not set in the Manitoba Telephone System.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

MR. TOUPIN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for Wolseley asked a question in regard to what is the government's intention pertaining to having cable services offered by means of the government directly. We have no such intentions. Whatever is being prepared and made available by the government, by this section, will be made available through any group that is interested in offering cablevision services. So there's no intent at present, in any case, although we're discussing with other provinces that do have an intention, to look at educational and cultural TV and so on. But we've had an agreement signed between Ottawa and ourselves in regard to the question of hardware. Saskatchewan and Alberta and other provinces in Canada are wanting to get involved into programming, into regulation of paid TV' of closed circuit TV and other information services within their own provinces. We sat down, just two weeks ago, with the Federal Minister of Communications to discuss such matters but for the time being, have been satisfied to clarify the policy set by the previous administration in regard to having the Manitoba Telephone System being the common carrier for all types of communications that was intended then and is now being offered through the Manitoba Telephone System.

The Member for Fort Rouge, unfortunately, I guess, has not been kept informed since I've been Minister. He's assuming that the Manitoba Telephone System has taken over total responsibility of communications. I happen to believe, equally, that the policy of a Crown corporation should be the responsibility of the government of the day. I don't see that the Manitoba Telephone System has done otherwise. They have not been formulating policy, they have been advising the Minister and cabinet in regards to contemplated changes in policy; whether it be in their role as offering hardware services to consumers in the province, in regards to changes of their own Act, regulations, we have very close liason with the Manitoba Telephone System by two or three methods that are being utilized now. One is that the Member for St. Vital is a member of the board of directors of the Manitoba Telephone System. I personally meet with the Chairman of the Telephone System on a regular basis' at least once a week, if not more often. My officials of the Communications Branch meet with officials of the Manitoba Telephone System. Both are being asked to help revise, formulate, contemplate its policies pertaining to communication matters in the province of Manitoba.

I happen to believe in that process, although Crown corporations should not be formulating and deciding pertaining to policies, I believe that they should be asked to look at policy matters and recommend changes, if need be. That's the role, in my opinion, of any civil servant that is being asked to review policy, or a Crown corporation, and I certainly do that.

The Federal-Provincial agreement that was signed in regard to the question of hardware ownership and distribution of services was arrived at by a lot of discussion within the Department of Communications and with advice received from the Manitoba Telephone System, by all means, and a lot of discussion with officials here and the officials of Madame Sauvé in Ottawa — meetings, telephone calls that I've had with her, myself, meetings between provinces, before we arrived at this

agreement. A lot of provinces felt that we weren't going far enough pertaining to the type of agreement that we signed with Ottawa.

We happen to believe that we had to reaffirm the policy of government pertaining to hardware ownership and distribution of communication services to the people of Manitoba through the common carrier, and at the time that we did and it was accepted as government policy based on consultation with a lot of people. I guess I can't say that I have consulted with the Member for Fort Rouge, because I haven't. Maybe the previous Minister has, I'm not aware of it.

There's ongoing meetings, not only of western Ministers — I happen to place some importance in meetings between the western Ministers. We've had, as I indicated a while ago, interprovincial and federal meetings of Ministers. All Ministers were present, apart from Quebec and British Columbia. Quebec was not present because of a premeditated decision. British Columbia's Minister could not be present, but at least officials were there. We've had a good exchange of views pertaining to future development in communications.

The program represented by the Telecommunication Development Branch in our province, as honourable members of the House know, is a relatively new responsibility, having been established in the fiscal year 1974-75. The branch, operating with a limited staff and budget, have pursued three major objectives:

- (1) To protect the province's traditional autonomy in common carrier matters from federal encroachment;
- (2) To represent provincial interests before federal departments and agencies responsible for broadcasting regulations;
- (3) To recommend policies for development in the provincial interests of new telecommunication technologies.

Provincial interests in broadcasting — the Federal Government has the exclusive responsibility for licensing and regulation of broadcasting services in Canada, although that is being challenged to some degree by provinces.

At the same time, however, the availability or lack of broadcasting services, can have a real impact on the social and economic objectives of the province, particularly the development of rural and remote areas, thus the branch has been active in putting pressure on the CBC, private broadcasters, and CRTC to extend broadcasting services to rural and remote areas of Manitoba. This pressure, combined with the fact that Manitoba Telephone System microwave rates for broadcasters are extremely reasonable, has led to a situation in which the outlying areas of Manitoba are relatively well served with radio and television. For example, by the end of 1977, CBC will have extended television services to all but three or four remote areas in the province. Second channel, CTV service, has been extended to about 95 percent of the settled area of Manitoba, and efforts are continuing to force further expansion in the near future.

Moreover, the branch has been active in a number of ways and efforts to protect the interests of the consumer of broadcasting, interests that are too often overlooked by the CRTC, an agency which many observers feel has become a captive of the moneyed interests of the broadcasting industry.

On the one level the branch has intervened on three separate occasions against efforts by one of the Winnipeg cable operators to raise monthly rates and I can produce correspondence to that effect — an increase from \$5.00 to \$6.00.

The company, Greater Winnipeg Cablevision, made its first application in 1975. Due to efforts from this branch the rate increase was not approved by CRTC until August, 1976, and even then the company got only half of the increase it had sought. The company applied again in January, 1977, for a further increase but representation by this branch and MTS led to the deferral of that application for a five-month period.

On the other level the branch, through the Minister responsible for communications, has made continued representation for reforms in the regulation of broadcasting. In Broadcasting and Cable Television, a Manitoba prospective, published in 1974 a system of rate of return regulation for cablevision was advocated with surplus earnings being put into extension of service and improvement of programming. This paper, one of the first to draw attention to the super-normal profits of the cable television industry was an important contribution to a growing consensus among provincial governments, academics and public interest groups that the broadcasting system is not now being regulated in the public interest. The Communications Act itself was being discussed in Edmonton a few weeks ago and we looked at the proposed Act and amendments in regard to additional responsibilities being considered to be delegated to provinces, delegated to the CRTC, but making the CRTC more responsible to the Federal Cabinet which I wholeheartedly endorse. I happen to agree with the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge that a Crown corporation, a commission, appointed by Cabinet, whether it be by a provincial or federal cabinet, should be responsible to that given Cabinet. I as a taxpayer can't vote out of office any board or commission but I can contribute to the voting in or voting out of a given party at the provincial or federal level. So we advocated that with Madame Sauvé and that is to be included in the proposed Act.

I happen to believe, Mr. Chairman, that this being yet a fairly new section of the Department of Consumer, Corporate and Internal Services — I could go on in regard to the target population that we have in mind, the program objectives of the section that we are discussing now, the one, two, three, five-year planning projects, description of program activities and so on but I did want to put on the record the program as represented by the branch for the year 1977-78 in a very brief form.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MR. AXWORTHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Minister in reply in part provided the kind of solution I was looking for except that he was endorsing it for the Federal Government not for his own Government. He said that one of the basic requirements is for regulation in an open way so that interventions can be made to defend the public interest, which I agree with. Under the new arrangements, however, that jurisdiction has now been split in the sense of the programming side on the federal level and hardware side on the provincial level. What we're lacking on the provincial level is Manitoba Telephone System, which now adds to the monopoly position, showing up anywhere to defend, justify, explain the kinds of rates and costs that it's beginning to charge. It was certainly my understanding, reading as much as I could that was available in the public wheel, that one of the bases for that federal-provincial agreement that was signed was the notion that the Telephone System would be accountable to the Public Utilities Board where it could be challenged, where it would have to explain its rates and now it no longer seems that it has to be. It seems to be hiding behind the notion that somehow or other in this area this is called a competitive area and it doesn't have to justify its rates.

A MEMBER: Where do you see that?

MR. AXWORTHY: Well there is no requirement at the present time for the Manitoba Telephone System to appear before the Public Utilities Board — (Interjection) — Well then they certainly aren't recognizing it in their own position paper. I wonder if the Minister has read what they are providing and I wonder if he has read this document. Well position paper or not, I think he should be taking a look at it because that's my point. Who is calling the signals in the area of telecommunications now? That's what we're trying to discover. Much of what the Minister said we agree with. The 1974 paper established the kinds of principles that established a provincial policy in telecommunications — some criticism of it, but generally I think I agreed with the outlines of it. We've been given assurances along the line as to how that would be conducted. What I see now is that we're continually getting locked into a position where there is less and less ability for the shaping of that policy to come from someone who has a comprehensive sense of it, and increasingly is residing in the locusts or the office of MTS, and if the Minister decides that's fine, that's where it should be, then I suppose we should get rid of this branch. I'm not suggesting that in any cruel way, but there's no point in duplicating the effort.

But, if the idea is that we want to maintain a group of people who can advise the Minister on a more comprehensive extensive way about the whole field of communication and how it can be used, that means that they have to be able to balance off their position against that of the telephone system which does have the hardware. I think one of the basic rules of government is those who have the muscle, exercise it, and nothing becomes more atrophic quickly with a branch or extension of government which has no power. They simply become irrelevant and considered to be lightweights in the whole jostling and manoeuvring that goes on inside public service quarters, and that's what is beginning to concern me, Mr. Chairman, is that the development of communications policy — I tried to present the Minister with some evidence of what I meant — the really almost stagnation of development of microwave services to northern communities. That I think has now become so tied up in inter-departmental conversation, committee-ship, and whatever, that in fact the extensions are how often — the Member from Thompson is here — how long has Thompson been promised a microwave service. I mean, how many years back does it go? — (Interjection) — And that's not the only place in the north, that's right, let's talk about Churchill and other places. How long has it really been since they've been promised, and the promise is still totally undelivered.

Now you have a community the size — and I have used Thompson simply because it is close to 20,000 — which gets, you know, 25,000 gets its television a week old. Well, you know, the problem is that the best laid plans of the Department of Communication, pardon me the branch, simply haven't fulfilled it, and I'm suggesting that is symptomatic, the fact that the whole delivery of microwave is not designed for communications purposes but for the purposes of serving whatever objectives the Crown Corporation has, and you can very quickly slide from one end to the other, which is what I think is happening. And that's what I'm trying to indicate to the Minister, not in an antagonistic way, because I indicated to him earlier that I agreed with the policy principle set forward in the government paper of 1974. What I'm trying to say to him is that I see a very major swerving away from the commitments made in that paper and I'm trying to indicate what I think are the causes, and I think the causes are that we have now become sort of hardware oriented and corporation oriented — I will have an opportunity to talk about the whole data processing thing at MTS — well, I think they are so

engrossed with their attempts to develop a data processing computer network that one of the funds that should be going to the extension of both delivery systems and program systems of communication, are being really swatched over into their data processing computer work. Now I can't, no one can see the books and get at it, and I don't have the capacity to delve into it. Those are the kind of concerns I have, that our communication policy really is beginning to be diverted and I'm just simply saying to the Minister, aside from meeting weekly and all this kind of stuff, maybe it's time for redeclaration of exactly who is doing what, what are the principles, what are the commitments, maybe that White Paper of 74 should now be brought up to date. We should now know exactly, you've now got the agreement that's been signed. That's fine, that's good. Now that you've got the agreement there, let's see what the government intends to do. Let's hear the projections in terms of its extension so that MTS knows what its targets are, at least. They know exactly what they are expected to do, and if they don't deliver then we know who to hold responsible.

We should be making sure that in any questions of rate increases, you know, when MTS says that the rate footage will go up from 60 cents a foot to \$1.25, for the use of the cable, why? I mean, where do those figures come from? What justifies that? Is that money that's going to be — that extra 65 cents — is that money that could otherwise be going into programming or extension of other services. That should be justified publicly, not simply established by MTS saying, "We decided that, and that's the way it is fellows, take it or leave it." That's the kind of issue that we're coming to, is the question of accountability, and who is making the decision. The people who will suffer from it are those who are still waiting, have been waiting a long time, for the extension of services. The poor Member from Churchill doesn't find out what he's said until a week later after he goes home. You know, it takes him a whole week to find out what he said in the Legislature.

Now that's something I think that really has got to be looked at, and I think that we are now suffering for it and we have really kind of lost the direction of this communications' policy that was set out with some boldness in 1974 and has now become very murky. And that really is the concern I have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. LES OSLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a few words and enter this debate. I believe the Member for Fort Rouge is taking up the same old cry that we've had in the north time and time again. That is the development of that which we've already accomplished and it is in direct confrontation to my position as far as the communities I represent in the north.

I know that there has been a cry time and time again that places like Churchill and Thompson, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake would like to have a second or a third channel on their TV, and I kind of would like to have it myself, as a matter of fact. I'm not too enthralled with Peter Gzowski every night and I wouldn't mind turning the switch and picking up an alternative program.

But I really take exception with his view that we're not extending the basic service, now I'm talking about the basic service, to places that need it. I wasn't intending to speak so I have no notes and it will be just off-the-cuff, but I would like to go back to before I entered politics, I was a member of the Department of Indian Affairs at the time and at that time the situation, with regard to communications came home hard to me, and it's really a matter of life and death when we come down to the basic problem. And as an Indian agent up in Churchill at the time we had the first motions of the Chipewyan people moving back to the bush, as they refer to it. And there was a sick baby at North Knife Lake and I heard nothing about it until six days after the child had first become sick. When we got the word — by the way, the only communication when they did get out was through Thompson — and that was when their radio was able to make connection through Thompson, and Thompson phoned us and we were brought up as a matter of fact, a jet propelled helicopter all the way from Thompson and they went into the community to get the baby. By the way, at that point in time, it was during freezeup and there was no aircraft normally could land in the community. By the time that the helicopter came back out with the doctor we didn't have a sick baby, we had a dead baby and it was a pretty sad situation. It was certainly sad for me because I was berated at great length by the father, who was absolutely just about out of his mind, the fact that the baby had been dead three to four days by the time we arrived.

So consequently, the radio system that we had up to that time was very very poor, it depended a lot on the ionosphere conditions up in the north and it just isn't something that you can rely on. When I was elected to office here, one of the points that I wanted to really drive home was that we needed something, even if it was a landline, something like the army use, that we could depend on so that these remote communities when they had someone sick, we could get them out.

Now, if I can just enlarge just a moment on the situation in those communities. There were runways built by this time, we had emergency runways, we had a Patient Air Transport operating and the missing link in it all was that when there was someone sick in the community the air ambulance was ready to come into the community, the community knew that they had someone sick and there was no way that they could communicate to Thompson or anywhere where we could get the direction for the plane to go in and pick up the person that was sick. It was at this point in time that I got really involved with MTS and really I have never been crying for a second channel in the north, at

this point in time. I feel that this problem — and a lot of my people have given me a hard time over it and I'm sorry — when it comes to a matter of life and death I want the basic damn service in that community. If I have to put up with Peter Gzowski, I've got to put up with him, but if it means that a baby is going to possibly die in one of those communities, I'll be damned if I'll make a choice on the other side of the fence.

Now, the Member from Fort Rouge has continued to dwell on this point about the Thompson people and I know, I've heard it. I sympathize with them and I would like to see us go a lot faster, but by the end of '77 we will have just about every one of the communities — and most of these communities that we're talking about are in my area. Out of 21 communities, we've got four major communities which have all now got good television. We listen, instead of Antik in Churchill now where we used to watch all the politics coming out of Vancouver, we're now actually watching Manitoba politics and I don't know whether I'm quite happy with that or not. At times it's exposing my position and what I'm doing down here. —(Interjection)— Well I sometimes wonder, Jim, I get a little frustrated with the whole situation in this House. But in any event, as frustrated as I get, if we can complete every one but four of the communities in Manitoba by the end of '77, I say, damn it, we're doing pretty damn good. Because I can remember back when conditions existed in northern Manitoba, in my riding, they were comparable to any underdeveloped area in this damned world and we had to put up with — I'm sorry, not we, I was a fat cat in Churchill, I was in the navy at the time and I really didn't have to put up with it, the people that lived in these remote communities had to put up with it — that third world conditions with a forty mile an hour wind blowing and 20 below zero. Now that's really rubbing it in. Now I think that as far as MTS is concerned, I've had my squabbles with them, I've had my complaints, but I will say this, that we have come a long way. I think that, really I must even enlarge a little bit on the basic problem. We no sooner got the situation kind of in the right direction as far as all the communities in the north, and the Chipewyans decided to go out to Tadoule Lake, that added another community. Then the Chipewyans from Brochet decided to go out into the bush. They are up in Lac Brochet now, so we've got two more communities that we've got to get to, and these haven't even got landing strips yet.

I really feel myself that we've come a long way, we've got a long way to go, believe me.

I would like to, just at this point in time if we could, ask the Minister to enlarge on the problem of Channel 7 I believe it is in Winnipeg and what we were trying to get, the alternative coming north. I believe that — I think it's Channel 7, I stand to be corrected on that — Channel 7 was given a mandate that they could have the Winnipeg area — and I'm putting it in very rough terms — but they had a commitment to go north. Now two years later nothing had happened. There was a lot of blame automatically came back on the MTS and there was squawks about the charges that were going to be placed on them as far as utilizing the microwave system that existed. I don't know what their reasons are in full and in depth and I'd like to ask the Minister if he would enlarge on that because I think it would throw a little light on just where the CBC has been coming forward as far as the television is concerned and I think the private group have been dragging their feet with the commitment for the north.

The basic microwave system — I don't really get too involved as far as TV is concerned. I see it as an excellent form of communication as far as telephone is concerned and that's been my drive. That's my emphasis and I would like to let you all know that that's the way I've been fighting for it. If we get TV along with it, believe me we will really enjoy that too. Such places as Garden Hill where I can just quote to you a little story that goes along with it.

There was one movie that got into Garden Hill and it was left there for three months by I suppose somebody had dropped the ball. For three months that movie ran every night, full house every night. That's how desperate these communities are for a basic thing. They don't ask for anything great and elaborate as far as entertainment even.

A MEMBER: What was the title of the film?

MR. OSLAND: I don't know' Jim. The one that we got stuck with during the war was Crystal Ball with Poullette Goddard and I watched that for three months and I went every night too I'll tell you. When you're desperate you go. —(Interjection)— Poullette Goddard has got better legs than Peter Gzowski too I would imagine.

But back to Square One. As far as my point is concerned and as far as communications is concerned I stick with it that let's get these microwaves in place, let's get the Telephone System working, let's make sure that we do not have a death, "a death." One death is just too much in 1977 to be happening just through the lack of a darned good communication system. I still would like to hear from the Minister with regard to what happened as far as the Moffatt organization was concerned with Channel 7 for the north.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Fort Garry.

MR. SHERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly endorse the words of the Honourable Member for Churchill and I'm sure all members of the Committee do, that the important thing is communication, microwave and communication, and the government and MTS are to be

commended for any and every effort they have made to date and will make in the future in extending proper communication services into the north and into all the remote areas of the province.

With respect specifically to cable TV communication, Mr. Chairman, just before the Minister responds to the Member for Churchill, I would like to put a couple of thoughts and challenges in his direction.

I certainly support any reasonable and viable effort and program to extend cable television service into as many areas of Manitoba as can be reached by coaxial cable, but I resent and resist efforts to do that at the expense of operators in the private cable television field. I think that this is what MTS and the government are effectively attempting to do. I think that there is a role and a function for government in extending services of that kind to areas not served, but I don't think that it is either ethical or in the best interests of the economy of this province to pursue programs that depend for their success on tactics that work to the disadvantage of a private industry and a successful private industry and one that contributes to the economic well-being of the province.

I don't think that this government has played fair, square or honest with the private cable TV operators. Nobody in this Committee and nobody in the broadcasting industry in this province knows exactly what this government is up to in the area of cable television and this government is not about to tell them.

Through the medium of its common carrier, MTS, and through a decision-making process that has been carried on almost totally behind closed doors for the past two-and-a-half years, the government has moved to invade the cable television field, to create a situation that poses a threat to the economic survival of private cable television operators and has not seen fit to tell those operators what the rules of the game are or what they have to cope with and contend with in the years ahead. This is the biggest concern that I have with respect to the government operations in this field, Mr. Chairman.

I don't object to the government using what facilities and what availabilities it has at its disposal to extend cable television services to areas that don't have it and can't be viably served by the private industry, but MTS and the government have not provided any information as to their policies in this field. Certainly they have not provided any firm or final information as to rate structures in terms of the economics with which private cable TV operators are going to be faced when the new contracts between MTS and the cable operators are effected in a few month's time. The kinds of rates that are being talked about, and in fact I would suggest have been virtually decided upon by the government and by MTS, are rates that are scaring the living daylights out of the private cable operators because they threaten them with an economic situation that will likely be untenable. It will certainly be extremely difficult and likely be untenable, Mr. Chairman.

This is the aspect of the government's operations in this field that I object to. I also think that the government and MTS are pursuing technological policies which are questionable at best because they are pursuing developments in the field of coaxial cable and existing technologies of that kind which in the view of the best experts . . .

MR. TOUPIN: On a point of procedure, most of the points now being made by the Member for Fort Garry were made during the review of the Manitoba Telephone System in Committee. If we talk of telecommunication, it is one thing, cable operators being assisted by the office of the telecommunication branch I think we can discuss, but when we are talking about the hardware portion of MTS being made available to private operators, I believe that that is something that should be discussed when we discuss the Manitoba Telephone System.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point is well taken. The Honourable Member for Fort Garry.

MR. SHERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'll try to stick within the confines defined by the Minister, but we're discussing the Telecommunications Development Branch in the Estimates and we are discussing policy in areas such as broadcast expansion, cable television, etc., and I suggest that the kinds of things I am talking about come under the general area of policy and policy decisions.

On that latter point, I don't intend to belabour it, I just wanted to suggest to the Minister that in the area of technological development and investment, I think the kinds of equipment that the Telecommunications Development Branch and the government generally are concentrating on, are open to serious question because in the view of many experts, much of the equipment being installed and being capitalized at the present time is equipment that is being technologically obsolescent, Sir.

The third challenge I would like to put to the Minister has to do with his suggestion earlier that he believes that everything that the province has done in concert with some other provinces in the last year or two with respect to jurisdiction over broadcasting has been in the best interests of the public. He suggests that the CRTC should be subordinate to and subject to the Federal Cabinet of this country because it's appointed by the Federal Government. And there may be many in this Committee who share that view, but I must say that I object very strenuously to that view. I think that runs counter to the whole philosophy that was hammered out when the Broadcasting Act was legislated in 1968. The whole purpose of setting up the CRTC was to take broadcasting out of the hands of the politicians. —(Interjection)— Well, they are responsible to Cabinet, but not for decisions

in terms of licensing, but this is what has happened. This is what has happened under Cabinet pressure, the CRTC has revoked or rescinded licensing decisions that it earlier made. Well — (Interjection)— it's effectively been emasculated, I think, Sir, by the intervention of the Federal Government and my understanding of the debate that proceeded the formulation of the Broadcasting Act in 1968 was to get away from that kind of thing so that politicians could not intervene in that kind of decision.

Sir, the Minister mentioned in some remarks a few moments ago that he was concerned with the social and economic objectives of the government in the broadcasting field and I would be interested in a definition of those social and economic objectives from him. I don't think we have ever had that — not to my satisfaction and certainly the private operators would suggest that they have not had it. Just what are the social and economic objectives? I know that several spokesmen for the government have said there is no intention of invading the field of content, but that's a pledge that is easier made than kept unless there are some pretty airtight guarantees that extension of government involvement into that field will be prevented by legislation or by regulation.

Those are my primary concerns, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of others related to the specific position that the Branch is taking, through MTS, with respect to contracts to be negotiated with the cable companies, but on the basis of the questions that the Member for Churchill asked the Minister and the areas on which I have just touched, I would appreciate hearing the Minister's response at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

MR. BARROW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to set the record straight, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Fort Rouge said Thompson gets the programs a week late. Those days are gone forever. Thompson has three stations — (Interjection)— They have CBC, they got CTV and they've got CESM by cable. Flin Flon has come a long way too, they have the two stations, CBC and CTV. Snow Lake and most of the outlying areas have it. I would just like to — not that the Minister can't take care of himself, but I wish he would be more sure of his facts before he states things. We're not as backward as he seems to think we are. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

The Chairman reported upon the Committee's deliberations to Mr. Speaker and requested leave to sit again.

IN SESSION

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

MR. BARROW: I move, seconded by the Member for Churchill, the Report of the Committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried and the House adjourned until 2:30 p.m. Wednesday.