



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

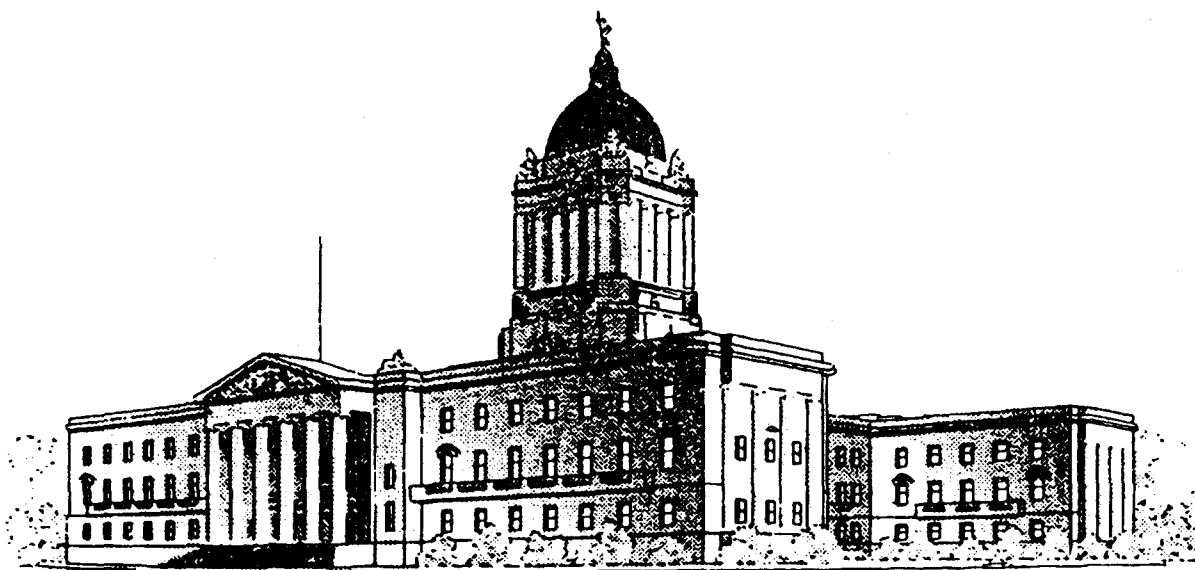
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	St. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
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McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 28, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to revert to Tabling of Reports? [agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report for 1997 for The Municipal Board.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twelve Grade 9 students from Arthur A. Leach Junior High under the direction of Mrs. Chandardaye Manmohan. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey).

Also, twenty-two Grade 9 students from River West Park School under the direction of Miss Tammy Rack. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

We also have 16 English as a Second Language students from Red River College under the direction of Mrs. Alice Landry. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Crown Attorneys
Operational Review**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). Madam Speaker, further to the question yesterday I raised about

vacancies in the Crown attorneys department and Crown office here in Manitoba, Mr. Hannon, a Crown attorney, has talked about the heavy caseloads and the stressful working conditions that have led to unprecedented numbers of Crowns quitting in the last few weeks.

I would like to ask the Premier today to do what we asked him to do a year ago in this Chamber and override his Minister of Justice and conduct an operational review of the Crown attorneys office in Manitoba in terms of the impact the Crown office has on caseloads and backlogs in courts.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that question. I know I have an ongoing opportunity to discuss issues with Mr. Gord Hannon. Of course, I, when I was a Crown attorney, worked very closely with him. Indeed, I met with him and other members of the association only two weeks ago, and this was not an issue that was raised with me.

I had occasion to speak with Mr. Hannon in respect of this particular matter, and certainly my understanding of the conversation with him is that the article in the newspaper does not indicate what in fact his position was.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, we have a situation in Manitoba where a Crown attorney dealing with the Flett case stated that she had 70 cases to deal with in one day. We had a situation on radio today where the Premier indicated that if a review was necessary—and we have said for a year that it is necessary—that a review would be conducted. I would like the Premier to take the action we asked him to take a year ago and deal with the situation.

We have vacancies that are of an unprecedented nature. We have cases, Madam Speaker, 70 cases with one Crown attorney. Surely, in the interest of justice for the people of this province, we can have an operational review of the Crown attorneys office. A similar action has taken place in the province of Saskatchewan. Can we please have that, as reported in the paper here in Manitoba?

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, I know that the member has a tendency to put inaccurate facts on the record and once again has done that. He indicated that there were eight vacancies in the Crown attorneys office. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) indicated that there were 15. In fact, that is not the correct figure. The only direct vacancies that I am aware of today are the two vacancies that were created as a result of the appointments last week. There is a reorganization going on, and my staff is very mindful of the impact that has on the Crown attorneys.

Indeed, on May 26—I might indicate this is somewhat coincidental that the member for Concordia would rise the day after this meeting occurred with the Crown attorneys and with the senior staff in my department to look at a long-term plan to ensure that the reorganization does not impact negatively on Crown attorneys and that, in fact, all these issues are dealt with on an ongoing basis. So, again, the member has brought misleading facts to this Chamber and then expects me to have any faith in what he is indicating to the Chamber.

* (1335)

Mr. Doer: I asked the minister yesterday about the numbers of vacancies in the department, and he did not even have an answer in this Chamber. He obviously is not on top of his department or he is misleading the Legislature by omission by not answering the question—[interjection] Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) laughs.

Mr. Flett was released on bail, and a Crown attorney stated that the day that person was released she had 70 cases on the same day. Do you not realize people are quitting? The head of the Crown attorneys association said: an unprecedented number of people have quit. That is another quote.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier to take action on the Department of Justice so that we can have adequate resources in the Crown attorneys office, and we can deal with the backlog in our courts and we can deal with the unprecedented numbers of cases the Crowns have here in our justice system.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, one of the reasons I did not specifically address what positions were, in fact,

vacant was that if in fact I made any mistake, then the member would come back and say, oh, now he is changing his mind or now he is changing his story. I would prefer not to do that.

I can indicate that, through the efforts of my colleagues in cabinet, they have approved a number of new positions in the Crown attorneys office. The Lavoie inquiry has resulted in seven new Crown attorney positions. That is essentially one-tenth of the Prosecutions staff that is being added and that, then, in addition to other support staff. So I am not saying that the system runs perfectly, but I am certainly saying that, if the member comes here expecting me to take action on the basis of what he says, at least get his facts right.

Crown Attorneys Operational Review

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. It was one year ago almost to the day that we began demanding in this House that the minister stop blaming everyone else and get a grip on the ugly parade of foul-ups caused by stresses in the Prosecutions branch, order an operational review so that the Crown attorneys, those hard-working Crown attorneys, can get the supports and protocol they need to do the job.

My question to the minister, who does not even know how many people are leaving, does not even know what his director of Prosecutions knows, is: would he reverse, stop his denials and admit that the exodus of Crown prosecutors and the Association of Crown Attorneys now joining us in their demand for an operational review is a way of saying that a government cannot be tough on crime while weak on prosecutions?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, every single individual case that this member has brought forward has been shown to be very faulty in the application once it comes to the analysis of the facts.

For example, the member for Concordia talks about 70 cases. Now, of course, he is misleading the House because it is not 70 cases. It could be 70 matters relating to bail, and that does not even necessarily mean 70 separate bail hearings. This member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Toews: I think one of the objective measures that we can use is looking at the length in which it takes a matter to come to trial. We have one of the best records in Canada, as opposed to other provinces, specifically B.C., where thousands of cases, thousands, not just eight cases that the member alleges some Crown attorney has not conducted properly—which I disagree with him—but thousands of cases in jeopardy in British Columbia because the NDP government there has refused to properly staff the people.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister at least admit, Madam Speaker, that public safety and victims have been compromised by a crisis of overwork, cuts and mismanagement, which has now moved to a crisis of a severe staff exodus from Prosecutions which will then lead to a crisis of inexperience, or does he not know what is going on in his department?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, that is incorrect. It is one of the areas that I take very, very close observation in respect of what is going on there.

As indicated, I met with the head of the union two weeks ago where we discussed a number of issues. Now this issue, despite the fact that we were together probably over two hours, was not raised. It is, I believe, because there are mechanisms within the department that are being utilized to ensure that Crown attorneys are receiving the appropriate resources.

I might indicate that every single time we believe there is an issue relating to resources, my colleagues in cabinet and government have provided those resources. So I am committed to ensuring that we in the Department of Justice have the appropriate resources. I look forward to the discussions that are ongoing between the association, between prosecutors and between my senior staff to ensure that, if there are concerns, we will meet those concerns.

* (1340)

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, would this minister, who is demonstrating he does not know what

is going on in his department—he is losing over a quarter of his prosecutors—explain: how will Prosecutions adequately protect our safety now? How many plea bargains and remands will be agreed to to get files off the desk? How many dangerous bail releases will be acquiesced in now, and what kinds of foul-ups should we be expecting? This is a crisis that he has created.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, again, the member misleads the House. He knows very well it is not one-quarter of the prosecutors. In fact, some of the things that we are doing is moving senior experienced prosecutors into the area of family violence.

Perhaps the member opposite does not consider family violence and domestic abuse an important thing, but I will tell you and I will tell the members of this House that I consider it a priority of this government that we have good prosecutors conducting those cases. So the changes that are the transfers being made, not the quitting, are in fact designed to strengthen areas of my department.

Health Care System Unlicensed Blood Products

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. One of the roles of the opposition and all members of a Legislature or a parliament is to raise issues of concern, safety and otherwise to the appropriate government for follow-up and investigation.

For a number of weeks, both here in the Legislature and in Ottawa, our critics have been raising the concern about the safety of the blood product albumin that is being used on a daily basis in our hospitals. Those safety concerns have not been addressed. I have had the opportunity to review the consent decree issued by the United States with respect to the manufacturing of this product, and there are very valid safety concerns concerning albumin.

My question to the Minister of Health today is: what specific steps is the Minister of Health taking to review the use of albumin in hospitals and in facilities in Winnipeg, and will he update us and outline for us what steps he has taken to ensure the safety of this product?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, I do recognize that it is the role of the opposition to bring these matters forward. I do

appreciate many occasions when the member for Kildonan does bring forward a variety of concerns, many of which I share, that are raised publicly.

With respect to the quality of drugs, of blood and blood products, of food products in our system, not only is the jurisdiction and responsibility with the national government, but very practically the ability for them to—for the assessments to be made accurately on product rests with them. The Manitoba Ministry of Health, because we do not have that constitutional responsibility, is not geared up to be in a position to redo that work, in essence.

I rely, as minister, upon my director of public health, Dr. Greg Hammond, who works very closely with authorities, for his advice on flagging whether or not there is a potential problem. He works very closely with his counterparts in Health and Welfare Canada. To date, I do not have a reason before me to take any of the steps that the member is suggesting.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, in light of the fact that I have been informed that a directive has gone out from Health Sciences Centre to not use the unlicensed product, will the minister be prepared to write to the Health minister, Allan Rock, outlining our concerns and ask for confirmation that, in fact, all steps have been taken and all steps will be taken to utilize the proper product in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, that is a very, very reasonable request, and I can tell him that that correspondence is being prepared. I was hoping to get it out this morning, but I can assure him that it will be out today. It is very good advice, and it was what I considered, as I said, doing in the few days. That letter, in fact, is being prepared.

* (1345)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister also make an inquiry to ensure that the lot numbers presently being used in Manitoba facilities are not lot numbers that were issued prior to the order being put in by the United States court in January that called for product to be destroyed, et cetera, because we are of the opinion that it is possible that blood product now being used is inventoried from November and October of last

year, and it may have quality problems that have to be reviewed? Will the minister ensure that is done, so that Manitobans can be assured about the safety of the product as well?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, facilities which are providing health care within this province or regional health authorities have that responsibility to ensure that their products are safe to the best of their ability. I can assure him that Dr. Greg Hammond is working with those facilities, particularly the Health Sciences Centre. The issue that he raises, I do not have specifics on it, but I can assure you that Dr. Hammond is on top of this particular matter. I would be pleased to advise him at some other time and update him on exactly the state of those lot numbers.

Joseph Akiwenzie Public Inquiry

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I rise today on a very important matter. I want to bring to the attention of this House, and particularly to the Minister of Justice whom I have some questions for, the death of Joseph Akiwenzie who died on the 12th of May of this year.

Madam Speaker, if you will bear with me, I have to bring forth some information here that is very important for the minister to know and also all Manitobans.

On May 1, Mr. Akiwenzie was beaten by two people in Brandon, and they stole his pension cheque as well. He was taken to the hospital later that day, admitted, wandered out of the hospital in a state of confusion as a result of head injuries that he sustained. He was determined to be drunk, police were called and he spent a night in the drunk tank.

Nine days after, on May 10, he was again taken to the hospital by ambulance, refused care again by the facility and was again taken back to the drunk tank. On May 11, the police, realizing that this man was indeed experiencing head injuries and could not even sign his own name with a pen—was returned to the hospital, airlifted to Winnipeg, and as a result, died of a brain hemorrhage on May 12.

Madam Speaker, this appears to aboriginal leaders in this province to have racial overtones, that maybe this

death could have been prevented as a result if this man was given appropriate treatment by the hospital and also by the police.

My question to the Justice minister: have charges been laid against the people that administered this beating on Mr. Akiwenzie? Equally, will the minister hold accountable the hospital and the Brandon city police?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for drawing this issue to my attention. I was briefly made aware of this situation this morning. I have not yet received any status report in respect of whether or not charges are laid. Of course, the laying of charges is a matter not for the Minister of Justice or indeed the Department of Justice or the prosecutors. It is a matter for police.

Now, if the member is raising a specific concern about the conduct of a police force, there are avenues to pursue in that respect, but I certainly want to assure the member that I think both the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and myself and others would be very concerned about the situation to ensure that everything that was done was appropriately done.

So, Madam Speaker, while I cannot give any specific assurances or comments at this time—indeed it may be inappropriate for me to do so if this is a matter that is under investigation, but if there is an appropriate time in which to further raise this issue with the member, I will do so.

* (1350)

Mr. Robinson: In a meeting with the Grand Chiefs of MKO and AMC this morning, Madam Speaker, they both concluded that attitudes and policies have not changed in the last 10 years since the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was commissioned.

The Grand Chiefs are also wanting the minister to enact an independent public inquiry, because certainly uncertainties will prevail for a long time surrounding the death of Mr. Akiwenzie. I would like to ask the minister if he will enact that independent public inquiry into this man's death.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, as the member may be aware, it would be inappropriate to have any kind of an inquest or an inquiry if there is an ongoing police investigation. So I would assure the member of my deep concern over the issue and that, if there is something that the Department of Justice should be doing at this time, it will be done.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I am sure that the minister, like myself and members of my caucus, does not tolerate racial indifference. I want to ask the minister if he will meet with the Grand Chiefs of MKO and AMC to further discuss the independent public inquiry and its parameters at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that invitation. It is not an invitation that I am at liberty to accept at this time. I know I have met with those individuals on other occasions. I have had very important and interesting discussions with them. While it would not be appropriate for me to meet at this time with them on that issue, I can certainly make very senior members of my staff available to them. In fact, I would encourage them to contact them, or indeed I will have my staff contact those individuals directly.

Manitoba Hydro Amalgamation—Winnipeg Hydro

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Hydro. It is quite disappointing in terms of the government's lack of leadership on something that is important to all Manitobans. We recognize the need for an amalgamation of Manitoba Hydro and Winnipeg Hydro. There are no doubt many benefits by moving in that direction, and this government has done nothing to that effect in the last 10 years.

My question specific to the minister responsible is: has the minister had any dialogue whatsoever with city councillors or with the mayor of Winnipeg with respect to Winnipeg Hydro and Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: It is an answer; I will give it that much, Madam Speaker. My question then is: will the

minister elaborate a little bit on his "yes" and tell us when did he correspond and what was the essence of the correspondence?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to elaborate. Indeed there have been personal conversations with the mayor and representatives of the council, the Executive Policy Committee, at a meeting in this building. I frankly challenged them to get the best advice they possibly could, consider it, and look very seriously at what I thought was an opportunity for the City of Winnipeg and the customers of Hydro, Winnipeg Hydro in the city of Winnipeg to perhaps enter into a relationship with Manitoba Hydro that would be to the benefit of Winnipeg citizens and for the benefit of the customers of Hydro in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the minister indicate then that the government is prepared to look at some form of compensation to the City of Winnipeg because they do use revenues from Winnipeg Hydro into their own general revenue? Is the province prepared then to enter into that sort of dialogue to ensure that the City of Winnipeg, in fact, will receive some benefit in the amalgamation of the two Crown corporations?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, of course we would expect the elected representatives of Winnipeggers to exercise very, very careful judgment and prudent business acumen in determining what was an appropriate deal involving a possible disposition of Winnipeg Hydro or a merger or some other relationship with Manitoba Hydro which would be other than a contractual one now respecting the provision of power by Manitoba Hydro to Winnipeg Hydro for the benefit of Winnipeg customers. So, indeed, we would expect them to come forward with a very responsible price or approach to negotiations which could lead to a transaction, as I say, for the benefit of Winnipeg citizens, Winnipeg customers and all Manitobans.

* (1355)

Winnipeg Child and Family Services Caseloads

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, how would we or how would the Minister of Family

Services know that caseloads for front-line Child and Family Services workers are too high? Would it be because the Child Welfare League says the ratios are too high? Would it be because the workers themselves are saying it is too high, because the Children's Advocate is saying it is too high? Well, now today we have a new answer. We have a supervisor testifying at an inquest who says, and I quote: by virtue of the fact that a child in the caseload died.

Is the minister willing to take this new evidence—not numbers, not statistics, but a statement at an inquest that a child died and therefore that caseloads are too high—and immediately institute a review of the caseload of workers, of the front-line workers of Child and Family Services agencies?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question, but I am not prepared at this point in time, until the inquest and all of the information is available and the report is done, to make comments on that inquest. I do want to indicate to my honourable friend, as I have in the past, that this year in our budget for Winnipeg Child and Family Services we have provided over \$63 million. That is an increase of \$25 million since the agency was combined into one agency back in 1991. That is exactly—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is an increase of \$25 million since 1990-91. That is exactly the amount that the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency has requested this year to provide services through their agency.

I know that Mr. Lance Barber, the new CEO for the Winnipeg agency, is going through right now and today, as we speak, a strategic planning process that will in fact look at all of the operations of the Winnipeg agency. I am sure, if members across the way have the opportunity to see what the results of that will be, they should be very pleased.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table three copies of a letter which was couriered to the

minister this morning from the workers in which they say: we find it incredulous that the minister would so deny the realities we face and will not accept responsibility for caseload numbers.

Why is this minister going to wait until the inquest is over when she already has the evidence that she needs today? Why is she waiting for the inquest to review the caseloads? Why does she not institute it today?

* (1400)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again I will indicate that we have not waited for anything. Winnipeg Child and Family Services requested over \$63 million in their budget this year, which they indicated would be sufficient to operate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, and again, Madam Speaker, I will repeat: Winnipeg Child and Family Services indicated that \$63 million this year was the budget they required to protect children in the city of Winnipeg. We provided that funding to them, and I will indicate again that the Winnipeg agency is not waiting for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will try again. I will indicate, and I will repeat again, that Winnipeg Child and Family requested \$63 million in order to do their job to protect children in the city of Winnipeg.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Family Services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I will try again. Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency requested \$63 million this year to provide adequate support and protection to the

children in the city of Winnipeg. We provided, through this year's budget, over \$63 million to the Winnipeg agency. That is a \$25-million increase since 1990-91, and that is a \$10-million increase over the year that the issue around Sophia Schmidt occurred. The Winnipeg agency is doing strategic planning today as we speak. They are not waiting for the inquest to be finished. They are looking at reorganization and restructuring to ensure that they can protect children. They are going through that planning—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I believe the minister is essentially repeating with various rather lengthy pauses what she has already been saying. I would point out Beuchesne Citation 417 makes it very clear that answers to questions should be as brief as possible. I would ask that you ask the minister to follow that. Any of the conversations across the floor are probably relatively minor in comparison to the normal exchanges that take place, and I think the minister is unnecessarily delaying and extending her answer. I believe she should be brought to order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we have more evidence of the strategy I referred to a day or so ago. Honourable members opposite create the disorder and then raise points of order to complain about it.

The honourable Minister of Family Services day in and day out has been trying to answer questions of the honourable member for Burrows and is interrupted by the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) over and over again. So the Minister of Family Services attempts to wait for some quiet to prevail in this Chamber so she can make her answers. She is not allowed to do so, and now we have a point of order. I ask you to look very carefully at that one because the point of order, if there is one at all, is given rise as a result of the behaviour of honourable members opposite.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the honourable member did not have a point of order.

When the comments are coming from both sides of the House and the Speaker stands, the member that has been recognized to speak to either pose a question or respond to a question is obliged to sit down and then can resume the answer.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, this minister wants to talk about budget numbers. We are talking about children who are dying. She should answer the question.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows, to pose his question now, please.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister, who wants to talk about strategic planning and not answer the question, if she will address the issues raised in the letter to her today. In fact, they call her responses naive, misleading and an abdication of her responsibility.

Will she agree to meet with these people? Will she agree to a workload review immediately and not wait another year until we have another report?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I knew that my honourable friend has been asking the same question now for four days as a result of the union asking him to ask those questions as evidenced by the letter that he tabled.

I take the issue that has been raised extremely seriously, and I do want all Manitobans to know that we, not only within my department but in the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency, are looking now at the kinds of issues that were raised two years ago when the issue around Sophia Schmidt did happen, and as a result of that there have been significant changes made, I know, at the agency level and I know within my department also.

They will continue in the Winnipeg agency under the new leadership of Lance Barber, the new CEO, to look at the best way to deliver protection services in the city of Winnipeg, and I know that we have provided funding that Winnipeg has asked for in order to do the job that they believe they need to do to protect children.

Betaseron Coverage Approval

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, four provinces in Canada cover the cost of Betaseron but here in Manitoba, where the incidence of MS is extremely high and human suffering is commensurate and despite the minister's January 1998 promise to cover Betaseron, even Manitobans who meet all criteria for coverage have not received a single Betaseron treatment.

So I want to ask the minister, who knows that Manitobans are suffering, when he will honour his word. What is the holdup? When will these individuals who meet the criteria finally receive Betaseron?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to provide the information to the member. It is a very important question, very important issue.

As the member remembers, the Manitoba committee recommended that we put a project in place to test this product. We agreed. We put the funding in place. The MS Clinic is to be the host for that project. They have done their preparatory work, hired staff. They have done the assessments on the eligible patients.

I understand that they only have today one physician working at the MS Clinic who is away attending a meeting on Betaseron in France, and the requirement to issue the drugs requires that particular physician to authorize the use of the drugs on individuals.

This was brought to my attention a couple of weeks ago, and we are attempting to identify other physicians who would be able to fill that particular component of the program.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I hope the minister can do that expeditiously.

I want to ask the minister if he will follow the example set by Saskatchewan and establish a high-cost drugs task force which would establish protocols for coverage so we could avoid the current ad hoc decision-making process and protect Manitobans from

unconscionable delays like the ones Manitobans with MS are now experiencing.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, our intent with the change in the approval for therapeutic drugs and the development of the Betaseron project is to do just that, to develop the kind of process and measurement tools, et cetera, to test high-cost drugs where the benefits of those drugs are not totally ascertained.

Regrettably, in this particular case with Betaseron, the number of physicians practising at the MS Clinic when the clinic undertook to be the host, I believe, was two or three physicians. They now have one physician who, as I indicated, has been away at a Betaseron meeting overseas. So we have been working with the MS community and that clinic to be able to find another way of expediting the medical part of the program. We are hoping that we are going to be able to see approvals very, very quickly. But it has not been for lack of effort or for lack of money to make this work.

* (1410)

**Gerald Wilson Jr.
Appeal**

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am responding in respect of a question that was posed to me yesterday by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) in respect of a specific trial involving a Mr. Wilson.

I could indicate that the Crown attorney who conducted the case has conducted a review of the transcript containing the judge's charge to the jury. He consulted with other senior members in the department, and it is the Crown attorney's opinion that no error in law was made in charging the jury in that case. However, the Crown attorney has recommended that the Crown file an appeal of the sentence imposed for the charge of manslaughter. The assistant deputy Attorney General of Prosecutions has signed this notice, and the same will be filed with the Court of Appeal.

Accordingly, as this matter is still ongoing, I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to comment any further.

**Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys
Meeting—Minister of Justice**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. The minister has recently purported to speak for the Chief Judge of Manitoba and today purports to speak, as well, for the president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys. Of course, I do not know if he hired another lawyer, Madam Speaker.

I would like the minister to tell this Assembly: is he saying that Mr. Hannon was misquoted when he says that seven of the people who have left out of a total of, we understand, 15, including a retirement, two secondments, two judges, that seven of them outright quit, or is he saying, as well, that Mr. Hannon was misquoted—on what? The heavy caseloads, stressful working conditions, the need for a detailed review, the poor working environment taking a toll on morale? What aspect is he purporting to speak on behalf of Mr. Hannon on?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I want to ensure that I stay in touch with members of our department. It is not simply the senior staff, but I speak to many of the line staff on an ongoing basis. I thought it was very important two weeks ago that I meet with Mr. Hannon on other issues. In fact, I met with him then; I have met with him on other occasions.

I prefer that these lines of communication stay open. Mr. Hannon, I know, is a very reasonable person, and I had a conversation with him this morning in respect of this particular issue. I do not purport to speak on his behalf.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Amnesty International

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, this is a very significant day, and this is a very significant year for those of us who are concerned about the human rights of people throughout the world. It is a very significant day because this marks the anniversary,

in fact, on this day in 1961 that the first Amnesty International campaign was launched in Britain.

I would like to indicate that the year marks both the 25th anniversary of Amnesty International in Canada and also the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The two are very much connected because Amnesty International works throughout Canada and throughout the world to ensure that the universal Declaration of Human Rights, which arose out of the terrible human rights violations that occurred in the Second World War—it is committed to the spirit, the application and the extension of human rights without any regard to borders, wherever those human rights are needed throughout the world. I want to stress that Amnesty International Canada has grown the last few years—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members having private meetings to do so outside the Chamber, please. It is very difficult to hear the members during members' statements, and it is a very important part of our Routine Proceedings.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I indicated, since 1973 we have had Amnesty International Canada established. In fact, one of the founders of Amnesty International Canada was Dr. John Humphrey, then a McGill University law professor who was one of the authors of the universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, there are more than 70,000 members and supporters. In fact, I have been pleased to be part of Amnesty International in the past myself.

I want to let all members of this Legislature know that Amnesty International is asking people to pledge this year, in the 50th anniversary of the universal Declaration of Human Rights, to make a personal pledge to learn about human rights proclaimed in the universal declaration, to do everything people can individually to help others become familiar with and actively support these rights and to carry out during 1998 one special personal activity that strengthens the protection of human rights in their school, community, family, workplace, faith, committee or other organization.

I want to suggest, Madam Speaker, that we as MLAs, as community leaders, all pledge ourselves to defend human rights in whatever way possible and to work with Amnesty International in this very important year. Thank you.

Mid-Continent Trade Corridor

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, today is indeed a momentous occasion for trade, international trade between Canada, United States and Mexico insofar that there are about 200 mayors and other officials meeting in the city of Winnipeg today, in the province of Manitoba, to discuss the furthering and expansion of the trade corridor between the United States, Canada, Manitoba and Mexico.

The potential of developing a trade corridor that is much larger than even today is very substantial, and it is noteworthy that a fellow by the name of Jerry Nagel, who was at the time in 1990 working for the University of Minnesota, came to see me when I was the Minister of Rural Development to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Penner: As I was saying, in 1990, a fellow by the name of Jerry Nagel came to see me from the University of Minnesota and suggested that Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota should start working together on developing an international trade corridor, realizing the potential between the United States or some of the states in the northern corridor and Manitoba in developing commerce and the traffic of commerce between the two or three jurisdictions.

That potential has grown dramatically now, including not only all of the states on the I-29 corridor and Highway I-75 corridor and right into Mexico. We believe that there will be a much greater degree of traffic created, adding to the already 750 trucks a day crossing the U.S. border at Emerson. The potential growth for Manitoba is very, very substantial. The growth in commerce, now a \$5 billion annual export initiative for Manitoba, will be substantially increased by this initiative. We congratulate the mayors for being willing to sit down and further discuss the potential for

growth in highway traffic and the creation of better traffic corridors even yet between Mexico, Manitoba and the rest of the United States.

* (1420)

Patriarch Bartholomew I

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): It is my privilege to extend words of welcome and bitaemo to His Holiness the Patriarch of the Orthodox Christian Church, Patriarch Bartholomew I, of Constantinople on his current visit to our province.

Last night I had the distinct pleasure of attending a dinner in honour of His Holiness, along with several other members of the Assembly, including the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), and we enjoyed the fellowship there. We certainly recognized that this was a once-in-a-lifetime event.

I was also impressed with the number of people who attended from across western Canada. We had some good exchanges of ideas and conversations with those individuals. The Orthodox Church has for centuries been the established church for millions of Greeks, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians and others. The Patriarch is the current leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians around the world. His visit to our country and to this province in particular is a cultural and religious event of historical significance, of course, and especially for the 300,000 Orthodox Christians in Canada and the approximately 13,000 Orthodox Manitobans.

The Patriarch's visit to Manitoba is also the pinnacle event of celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the Ukrainian branch of the Orthodox Church. So I would therefore like to extend congratulations to members of the Ukrainian Orthodox community as well, then, for reaching this significant milestone. I would ask that the Assembly join with me in welcoming His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to Manitoba.

Debt Management—Portage la Prairie

Mr. David Fauschou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, most Manitobans are shocked when they are

made aware of this province's expenditure of over \$500 million to service our debt annually. The Manitoba government's balanced budget legislation means living within our means, just as every Manitoba family must live within theirs. By balancing our budget and paying down our debt, we are using less money to service our debt, and these funds are now being made available towards education, health care and other funding priorities.

I am pleased this afternoon to make all honourable members aware of the introduction of a by-law by the City of Portage la Prairie to restrict the issuance of debt. By recognizing the value of balancing one's books and paying down one's debt, the City of Portage la Prairie has again proven itself as a leader among communities. The city's debt-management plan, when passed, will set the stage for the city to be debt free by the year 2012. Councils have succeeded in significantly improving the city's financial position over the last few years. In fact, the city has reduced its annual tax rate by 10 percent since 1991 and has eliminated that much maligned business tax, while maintaining the level of servicing and expanding services.

So, on behalf of all members here present, I would like to extend congratulations to Mayor Carlson and council for their foresight and willingness in this regard. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to once again comment on the Manitoba versus Winnipeg Hydro situation.

Persistence is important when government totally ignores an issue which is important to all Manitobans. I do not believe the government is sincere in its attempts to acquire Winnipeg Hydro, and I do think that that is unfortunate.

In the last 10 years this government has done nothing in order to look at acquiring Winnipeg Hydro, and I think, if we want to see hydro development that is consistent with sustainable development policies amongst other things such as consumer rates, that there is a need to see the two Crown corporations amalgamated. I would argue and emphasize to the

minister that it does not make any sense to have two publicly owned Crown corporations providing electricity to the province.

It does not make any sense, and I would hope the government will indeed treat this issue much more seriously, address it, and the only other thing I would add to that is they also recognize the importance of Hydro remaining a publicly owned utility, that we do not move in the direction as we did with MTS. That is the one qualifier, of course, that I would put on it and hopefully we will see the day when it will be one publicly owned Crown corporation providing electricity and it will remain a publicly owned Crown corporation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would there be a disposition to waive private members' hour today?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to waive private members' hour?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

As previously agreed, the House will reconvene in Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon the committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Justice. When the committee last sat, it had been considering 1.(b)(1) on page 95 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Just to pick up where we left off, the minister I think was responding

to the question of how many vacancies are on the Provincial Court once Ms. Everett and Mr. Wyant are officially appointed.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Chair, the issue of whether we have too many or too little judges depends upon whom you talk to. There is not a fixed contingency of judges, and by and large the assessment is made in the consideration of a number of variables.

Mr. David Faurschou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I think some of the variables that are considered when determining the appropriate number of judges require an analysis of things like the number of offences brought to court, and that again is a difficult issue because there are issues such as: Are they highway traffic offences? Are they Liquor Control Act offences? Are they Criminal Code offences? Are they youth offences? All of these matters require different resources.

The issue also involves a consideration of whether or not diversion is an alternative in respect of dealing with these courts. Are there community-based justice services that are being introduced or that have been introduced that affect the volume of matters that are dealt with by the police and which then the police utilize rather than referring something to the courts? The issue of what kind of hearings they are. It could be an offence but it could also be a bail hearing and bail hearings traditionally take a few minutes for an experienced Crown attorney to make submissions and to consider the issues involved. So one could look at a Criminal Code impaired driving trial which might take some bit of time, and then the other issue is, well, can that be equated with a bail hearing? And clearly not. The one deals with substantive legal matters and the other ones deal with allegations.

Again, an issue that might affect the numbers of judges that we need are the number of violent offences before the court. Clearly some violent cases are more difficult to prosecute than others, although I would say that many technical offences that are, not because they are only technically offences, but rather they are very technical in their ability to be proven, take a lot of time.

Impaired driving and especially the .08 does take an awful lot of time. So, as we see success with some of our other programs in reducing the number of trials in those technical areas such as impaired driving and more legally simpler matters are dealt with, that could again affect how many judges we require.

Again, the other issues are there are the effects of innovative approaches to managing caseloads in the court and the use of judicial officers such as magistrates, and so we have docket management, custody co-ordination and magistrate's court. For example, if we look at our northern justice strategy, we have a magistrate doing many of the preliminary things that an entire court party used to do, and this has resulted in the judge being able to focus on the very contentious issues rather than dealing with more routine matters which can be safely left with the magistrates. So, again, the impact of those kinds of innovative approaches are very, very important.

The other point that can be made is that the Crown itself has made a number of initiatives, such as precharge screening. These, again, reduce the number of cases that find their way into the court system by ensuring that only these cases that are appropriate proceed. Clearly, other issues involve the approaches that make more effective use of court or, that is, judge time. We look at the impact of court-initiated practices such as pretrial conferences and changes in how screening courts are used. Clearly, we have to look at what is a judicial workload. There are currently no standards in place anywhere in Canada. I read with interest the report of the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, and he indicated that, even though the number of files was going down in the Court of Queen's Bench, because of the case-management strategy, that would result in more work.

Perhaps I am not understanding the report very well, but I would have thought that, as one case-managed, there was less opportunity for the matter to go on for lengthy periods of time. I know that there are a number of those initiatives that require lawyers to proceed expeditiously with their cases in the hope that this will result in a settlement and then ensure that court time is not used.

* (1450)

So the number of Provincial Court judges then is—and the appropriate number of court judges is always an issue that needs to be looked at. I can indicate that we have approximately 27 judges in Manitoba—in Winnipeg, I am sorry, 27 Provincial Court judges in Winnipeg, and in the regions outside of Winnipeg, we have 10. One of those includes a woman in the regions, nine males. In Winnipeg itself, we have five female judges and 21 male. I might indicate that it was our government that has appointed four of the six female judges. So we have a total complement of either appointed or to-be-appointed of about 37. I understand we still have retired judges sitting part time. Those are five judges, and that is the equivalent to two and a half positions. So we approximately have almost 40 positions, full-time judges. Again, there is a flexibility in the judges, the part timers who can sit more or less as the need develops.

The Chief Judge and I, I know, have had discussions, as have our staff had discussions on the appropriate number of Provincial Court judges. It was essentially—very, very briefly—the number of vacancies, depending on who you talk to, and by that I do not mean vacancies, I more mean the need required is, even before the two most recent appointments, anywhere between zero and four. So it was my intention to proceed on two of these, which we have, and now, because of circumstances, it looks like we will be required to appoint a third in order to meet certain, I believe, obligations that we have, particularly in the area of French language capacity. So, of the four I think that have been identified on the one side and the zero, we have appointed two already and we are proceeding to appoint a third. I would not say that we have any vacancies, but as need arises or need decreases, it may mean that as others retire, we do not have to reappoint or we may in fact increase the number of judges, the hours of judges who are sitting part time or indeed appoint other judges.

That is a very, very brief summary of the criteria and whether or not we have vacancies. I have an entire listing of all the judges, but I do not think it is important at this time to indicate in fact who those are, other than mentioning the part-time judges. I note that there is Judge Enns, Judge Harris, Judge Johnston, Judge McTavish and Judge Kimelman who are presently proceeding on a part-time basis.

Mr. Mackintosh: What is the statutory limit on the number of full-time Provincial Court positions?

Mr. Toews: Again I thank the member for the question. As far as I am aware, there is no statutory limitation or number in The Provincial Court Act or otherwise that determines how many Provincial Court judges are required. It is, I guess, more an issue of the resources available and the need for a judge rather than numbers.

Mr. Mackintosh: Taking the number of four, the minister said it would be the maximum current need. Taking away the two appointments currently being processed and presuming an upcoming bilingual appointment, what is the fourth position? Is that located in a particular regional court or is it in Winnipeg? I wonder if the minister could explain, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Toews: No, in fact I have never indicated that there are four vacancies. What I have said is that, depending on who you talk to, there is anywhere from zero to four, even before the appointment occurred. I know that if, for example, we decided that there was a need for another judge in Winnipeg after the two in Winnipeg have now been appointed and another bilingual, and if we decided there is another need for a Winnipeg judge, we could proceed to put that process forward.

The issue, I guess, is that if, let us say, there was all of a sudden a huge expansion up in Flin Flon of people and we needed more court resources there and a judge there because there was a demand, we in fact would—there is nothing preventing us from appointing a judge there.

So, once a person is appointed a Provincial Court judge, they are legislatively competent to sit anywhere in the province, but we do assign—I am not exactly sure how we do that, whether it is specifically in the Order-in-Council or not—where the home base of a particular judge is. But I know that, for example, even a judge who is based in The Pas, if we have a requirement of that judge to come down to Winnipeg to conduct a matter, there is nothing constitutionally or legislatively that would change that in any way.

* (1500)

The issue with respect to the bilingual matter, as we know we have one judge stationed in The Pas who will be going on sabbatical in due course and the other judge in Winnipeg.

Now there is nothing preventing that judge in Winnipeg from going to Thompson to deliver the services or the judge in The Pas to come down to Winnipeg to deliver those services. So, again, it is an issue of administrative efficiency, it is an issue of workload, but one could not say at this time that there are any vacancies. It is an ongoing process that is assessed as to need.

Mr. Mackintosh: So the minister hired a lawyer to deal with the Chief Judge in respect of the meeting of May 4. I am wondering if the minister can tell us what the estimated cost of that legal assistance was, and second of all, if he can answer this, as well, in the same question, whether there is ongoing work as a result of those instructions.

Mr. Toews: Well, I have not had any direct contact for some time with that lawyer—I am just trying to remember—because that lawyer is used by the government of Manitoba in a number of contexts, and I cannot recall whether on this particular issue I have required his services lately. I do not believe I have. I certainly have not given any instructions to that individual at this time. So, as for what the bill is, I do not know what that bill is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister aware of whether the lawyer at any time contacted the Chief Judge directly following the issuing of his instructions to Mr. Olson?

Mr. Toews: I am not aware of whether he did or not. It is my understanding that he did not.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just had a question following from the discussion on judges that arose. This goes back to about February of '95, a result of our caucus's Task Force on Violence Against Women, and in its travels and studies that we thought it was important that bail applications be prosecuted by prosecutors in the Family Violence Court. In other words, there would be specialized prosecution by people with more training in the dynamics of domestic violence than allowing bail to continue in the adult criminal courts.

We were very pleased then when the Lavoie report came up with what I would—I think it could be fairly characterized as a major, certainly a significant recommendation that bail hearings in respect of charges relating to domestic violence be heard in the Family Violence Court. I think there was a thinking that it should not only be the prosecutors who are specialized but perhaps a special cadre of judges, however, that can be arranged, whether it is by application or assignment.

I recall in a press conference where the minister was saying that that recommendation has not succeeded in being translated into policy, because there had been some reluctance or there had been some opposition to that recommendation.

I am wondering if the minister can tell the committee the status of that recommendation.

Mr. Toews: Yes, indeed, that was a recommendation of the Lavoie inquiry, and we were quite supportive of that particular recommendation.

Manitoba, as the member is aware, was one of the first provinces to have a Domestic Violence Court, Madam Speaker, and it was seen as a natural adjunct to that Domestic Violence Court that domestic violence bail applications be heard separately by a certain cadre of lawyers, and indeed the recommendation of Mr. Justice Schulman in the Lavoie report was that also, perhaps, a particular judge or at least a separate court room would deal with those domestic violence cases.

We made that recommendation, and because we do not control the judges, that is something that they would have to consider in terms of implementation. I understand that the Chief Judge went back to the judges, and it was their decision that there not be a separate domestic violence bail court.

I might indicate that the judges are receiving, on their own accord, ongoing training in respect of violence, domestic violence. I believe they have all attended the Stop the Violence conference. We have increased funding for educational matters for the judges, and so we are doing what we can within our constitutional criteria. We believe that there is some merit to the recommendation, but we respect the position of the provincial courts.

Our own prosecutors, however, will or have received the appropriate training and specialization so that, even though what will occur now is that all bails will be done together, that is, they will not be separated out, domestics and regular bail applications would be in the same docket, our domestic violence Crown attorneys will in fact be doing those bail applications, even though we do not have a judge that would be specifically identified as a domestic violence judge. So we have taken the appropriate steps, I believe, to ensure that the spirit of Lavoie is implemented. We are committed to continuing to work with the judiciary in order to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to address any problems as they arise. We, in fact, believe that the process that we have adopted is the best that can be done in the circumstances.

Mr. Mackintosh: What does the minister understand is the reason of the judges for not wanting the bail to be handled in the Family Violence Court?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Toews: I do not want to put words in the mouths of the judges, but I understand that the decision was that they felt that both the regular bail hearings and the domestic violence bail hearings could be held in the same docket and that the judges of Provincial Court were appropriately qualified to deal with both types of bail applications. That being their position, as I understand it, that is a decision we have to live with.

* (1510)

As I indicate, that does not prevent us from continuing in an ongoing way to improve service in this area, and we believe that wherever we can work together with the courts in enhancing the services in this area, we will. So I do not know whether the judges believe their position is correct on whatever principle. I do not know what the principle is. It is just that they believe that they can do the job appropriately in a regular docket, and I have to respect their opinion.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee whether the Family Violence Court is comprised only of specialized prosecutors or does it also comprise a cadre of specific judges who are assigned or apply to Family Violence Court exclusively?

Mr. Toews: I am advised that it is the Chief Judge who assigns the judges to the court. I am not aware of the criteria that are used. I believe that most judges, if not all, and I do not know, have at one time or another served in that court. But, again, the assignment of judges is a responsibility of the Chief Judge, and whether some appear in that court less than others or more than others, I do not know. The criteria is the Chief Judge's. I do not think however that there are any specifically designated judges who you would know that these are the people that you will meet when you go to that court.

For example, in the area of the Queen's Bench, we have the general division, which does everything, and can even do family law. I am speaking of that in a legal sense that they can do it. They are entitled to do it. There is, of course, the Family Division which specifically hears family cases. That was first established as a recognition that there were certain unique characteristics about family law that took it apart from the general litigation or other criminal cases.

Whether one can make the same argument in the Provincial Court, I do not know. I realize that there are different issues involved in domestic violence. It is not simply an assault, for example, committed by one stranger upon another stranger. These assaults occur between people who know each other, live with each other and may have done so for a long period of time.

So there are ongoing issues of how do we deal with a particular situation knowing that these parties may continue to live together. In a situation where you have a break and enter, for example, a stranger entering someone else's home, stealing something, robbing someone, that may well—I think the considerations are different, but I do not know whether the differences are enough to justify a total separation of the courts as they have done in the Court of Queen's Bench. All I can say is that we saw merit in the recommendations of Mr. Justice Schulman relating to a separate domestic violence bail court, and we thought it was a natural outgrowth of the Domestic Violence Court that we have. Even though the judges themselves are the same ones, there is a different focus of cases in that court.

So I think that is all I can say about that particular issue.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have some questions relating to the issue raised in Question Period yesterday and today respecting the Prosecutions branch. Is the minister in a position to answer those questions now, or does he require his staff, particularly Mr. Finlayson, here to answer those questions?

Mr. Chairperson: Before the minister has an opportunity to answer that, maybe I could have leave of the committee to move in the order of—Prosecutions are under 4.2(b). So, if we could have unanimous consent to move to that section, revert to that section, is there unanimous consent of the committee? Agreed? We are on line 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits. 4.2(b) is Prosecutions. Is there will of the committee to—

Mr. Mackintosh: My intention was simply to ask a series of questions under the Executive Support section. I mean, if it is not convenient, we can move along towards the Prosecutions branch line with the staff here.

Mr. Chairperson: Whatever the will of the committee is—

Mr. Mackintosh: I am just asking the minister if he is able or wants to deal with it now or does he want to deal with it under Prosecutions.

Mr. Chairperson: For the benefit of the committee, maybe it might be just as easy to get unanimous consent to move forward to that portion and then revert back, if that is okay with the committee. Agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Toews: I think I can answer some of these. I know that the staff member involved will be coming along shortly, and if I cannot answer it, I will indicate that and we can maybe proceed to another matter. But I am prepared to look at the questions and consider them.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister disputed the number of people leaving the Prosecutions branch in the House today and disputes the number even given by the president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys, and—my understanding—disputing, Mr. Chair, information given by Mr. Finlayson to the media. I just want to go through the numbers there. Our

information, of course, relies on other people in the system. We are certainly subject to correction, but it is our understanding that there have been—the Prosecutions branch, in respect of adult and youth prosecutions, not dealing with Family Violence Court, will be down over the next week or so by 15 in number. I just wanted to put on the record our understanding and if the minister can respond to that.

* (1520)

First, of course, we have the appointment of two judges, two highly experienced, respected Crowns who are going onto the provincial bench. I might add at this time that their loss is going to be felt, particularly knowing that Ms. Everett has a lot of experience in youth and has been starting to get more involved in some gang specialization, and Mr. Wyant has been involved in youth prosecutions and has been involved most recently of course in an acting capacity in a more senior position.

I also understand that then there have been two people seconded, Ms. Kopynsky and Mr. Slough, and Mr. Slough, coming from the youth court as well, experienced Crown, two Crowns which I have high regard for, and they are seconded to the child death inquest. Then I understand there has been one retirement. That was Mr. Jack Montgomery, in the last few weeks or the last few months, I should say, for a total of five there.

Now, getting into sort of the nub of the crisis, I understand that three have gone to the federal Department of Justice; four are going to the Family Violence Court, three of whom are from outside of Winnipeg; two of whom are going into private practice; an additional one of whom is expected to formally be resigning any day, if he has not already done that. I believe that is a total of 15. I wonder if the minister, having got that breakdown, can now again—is he going to say that there are only two people, and the two people are going to the positions on the Provincial Court? There is a big difference between two and 15.

Mr. Toews: Indeed there is a big difference between two and 15. I think it is very important to deal with the questions that were put to me. The question that Mr. Doer stated to me is this—I think it is important to

understand what questions were asked. He indicated: “Madam Speaker, can the minister confirm that three Crowns have just recently been hired by the federal justice system, two have gone to private practice, one has left the service and two judges last week were appointed by the minister—two Crowns were appointed as judges, leaving at this time eight vacancies?” In the Crown attorneys office, eight direct vacancies?

Then, further on, the member for St. Johns says, and I quote, and this is all from Hansard May 27: “Since the minister did not answer that single question, if the safety of Manitobans is threatened now when bail prosecutors have up to 70 files a day, when there are backlogs of up to two years now even for child victims, how will the added caseloads and backlogs impact on the ability of prosecutors to protect our safety now that eight prosecutors have said enough, four more have gone to the Family Violence Court, one has retired, two have seconded, for a total of 15 losses?”

You can see how he is doubling up on those going to the Family Violence Court and that, but let us just take a look. We have the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) saying that there are eight direct vacancies today. That is what he is saying. And the member for St. Johns is saying that there are 15 losses. That is simply not accurate.

What I am aware of—and my staff is here and they can certainly correct me in any respect—is that last week two Crown attorneys were appointed to the provincial bench: Catherine Everett and Raymond Wyant. So they were appointed. Those two positions are vacant. Mr. Ed Sloane out in Portage la Prairie has decided to go into private practice. He has not left yet, but he has decided to go into private practice, and he has indicated that he will continue to deal with some of the major cases that he is presently responsible for. That is my understanding. So June 5, he is leaving, but he will continue on with some of the cases. Then Pat Flynn, Annie Krahn and Michael Foote are going to the federal government.

Now those three individuals I might indicate are not leaving until either sometime in July. Michael Foote, who is not a permanent employee, he is a term employee, is going to the federal government as a full-time lawyer there, is in fact going at the end of June.

So these three people have not left. Pat Flynn, Annie Krahn and Michael Foote have not left. They are still there doing their work.

I understand that Dave Saper, who is also not a permanent Crown attorney but is looking for permanent work, is leaving sometime in June. So, again, of those eight—or seven people, only two have left because they were required, given that they were appointed to the bench. Three other individuals, Vic Bellay, Melinda Murray and Peter Williams, are in due course being transferred to Winnipeg, not leaving the department, they are being transferred to Winnipeg as a result of the Lavoie matter. We are expanding our Crown attorneys by, I believe, a number of seven as a result of Lavoie. These three individuals will take three of those positions, but my understanding is that they are not leaving until those positions are filled.

So again, the member who indicates that these people are gone, that these are direct vacancies, is wrong. These people have not even left their position today, and they will not leave, I understand, until we find replacements in Brandon, The Pas and Thompson. Peter Williams, in fact, is in a very unique position working not only with the Ministry of Justice but indeed with MKO.

So again, of these 10 people, only two have left, and over the next couple of months five will leave, and we will be able to find replacements for them. The other three who are being transferred to Winnipeg to enhance the Domestic Violence unit will be replaced by others before they leave their particular posting is my understanding.

Now in respect of the two Crown attorneys who are working on the inquest, the Health Sciences inquest, Mr. Slough and Ms. Kopynsky, I understand that they will be coming back in October or so. [interjection] I am sorry, September 25, I understand from my staff. So those two will be coming back. But the suggestion that again these positions are vacant, is simply not correct. These positions have been filled by other lawyers over the past two years. Mr. Montgomery, who has fairly recently done work for us—I believe he is retired—but I am not aware of whether we have filled in behind him. [interjection] Yes, in fact I am advised that his position has already been filled in.

Now the names that I received or the positions referred to by the member are 13 names. Slough and Kopynsky have not left the department. They are still with the department, and they are on specific assignment right now. They will be coming back to regular Crown duties—September 25 is the anticipated return—but in the meantime, we still have term lawyers filling for them. Mr. Montgomery, who has continued to do work for the department, his position however has been filled by a permanent lawyer. So again, of those three, they are wrong.

In respect of the three positions involving Mr. Williams, Ms. Murray and Mr. Bellay, they are wrong. They have not left the department. In fact, I believe that those people, by moving into Winnipeg to enhance the Domestic Violence unit, will be strengthening our department. So here of the six names or six positions, they are wrong.

* (1530)

In respect of Mr. Sloane, who will be going to private practice, he has indicated he will continue to do some work for us, and we appreciate that. I know Mr. Sloane very well. I articulated in Brandon when he was the articling student just ahead of me there, and I know he went on to Thompson and Swan River, I think back to Brandon then, and then Portage la Prairie where he has been serving for the last number of years. But again, he is going to private practice because the opportunity that presented itself, because of Brent Stewart being appointed to the bench in The Pas leaving a vacancy in a private firm there, so it was an opportunity and he felt it was a good career move.

Now the other three that we have not addressed dealing with the federal government, the federal government has expanded very, very rapidly over the last little while in terms of aboriginal law and also proceeds of crime. So I do not know exactly which position these three are going into, but again they see opportunities from the federal government. This is something that has happened, I think, on a continuous basis in so far as our department has—our department has been recognized as having some of the best counsel in Canada. If you look at the federal government's office here in Winnipeg, you will see that any number of those Crown attorneys served a lot of time with the

provincial government. For example, Mr. Gosman served a lot of time with our provincial government. He was the president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys when I was the vice-president of that association. Mr. Clyde Bond was there; Mr. Dave Frayer was there. So it is something that occurs on an ongoing basis that our provincial prosecutors go to the federal government for one reason or another.

I do not know how many have ever come from the feds to the province, other than our deputy minister, who once was a prosecutor in the Winnipeg office and now is a deputy minister. So I think that is a healthy relationship, that there is an exchange of people. I know, for example, when I was in Legal Services, some of our staff would be seconded for a period of three years to Hydro. One of our lawyers, I recall, when I was there, went to Hydro for three years. Again, nothing wrong with that. In fact, I encourage that kind of thing to occur because I think people need changes.

I know in my own career in the Attorney General's department—before I go on, I would just like to introduce Ms. Lynn Stannard who is the acting director of Prosecutions who has joined us at the table.

But in my own career in the department of the Attorney General, I left Prosecutions after three years; I went to Legal Services indeed after a discussion with the associate deputy minister, as he is now. He was simply a line lawyer at that time, Mr. Perozzo, but I came into the Legal Services side in 1979, and I stayed there until 1986. At that time I transferred to Constitutional Law and stayed there until 1991. So transfers are not unique or a bad thing. I think they have been happening for an awful long time, and they will continue to happen.

So the member here has indicated that there is a serious systemic problem. Now I am not going to question—and you know, I had a conversation, for example, with Mr. Hannon this morning. Mr. Hannon does have concerns, but one of the things that I know that he speaks about very regularly is the good working relationship he has with Manitoba Justice, I believe the good working relationship that he has with me. So the impression, I think, that is left in the newspaper is that there is something that is simply—that criticisms have been made and that those criticisms are not being

addressed. I believe that there are processes in place. If additional processes are required, we will work on those issues. We know that on an ongoing basis there are demands on these prosecutors for their services. They do a good job. As a result, in fact, of these transfers and changes in the department over the last little while, the senior staff have dealt with that issue in a very, very proactive way.

Firstly, they have identified what the concerns are and that is that there is an immediate need to address the replacement of prosecutors within the open positions. Some of these, I understand, can be addressed through the hiring of articling lawyers who have been with our department already for a year and some of those can be hired. I understand we are looking at that particular option and again that is the standard kind of thing that occurs. I know my own experience was that I articulated in Prosecutions and then I was hired to take a position, so we often like to keep our students when they complete their articles and become full-fledged lawyers and prosecutors, and so that is part of an ongoing plan.

* (1540)

The second is the ongoing issue to ensure that at all times we address the requirements of appropriate staffing for the reorganized department. This is something that has been done on an ongoing basis, that on May 24, there was a meeting between senior Crown attorneys and the deputy director of Prosecutions who met with the acting director of Prosecutions at that time. A further meeting was had on May 25, to discuss these concerns, and on the 26th a specific group was formed to address these issues, to ensure that we will have a staffing plan that will incorporate professional and support staff needs, so the suggestion made in today's paper that this was not being done or there was some kind of a difference of opinion between the minister and the Association of Crown Attorneys is simply not correct. The focus of the group is to solve problems. It is not to create disputes.

One of the things that I think has been very successful over the last year and a half or year, in any event, is the committee dealing with the aftermath of the Headingley situation, which is chaired by Mr. Scurfield, where members of the union and members of

staff sit down on an ongoing basis to discuss issues as they arise. So I understand that, as a result of that meeting on May 26, they are embarking on a similar type of a process. This is not to say that this has not been done in the past on an ongoing basis, that it would not have taken place in some other context, but I think it is important to bring the union directly into the discussion of a staffing plan that will incorporate both professional and support staff needs.

So one of the issues that I know that particular committee will be looking at is looking at issues such as complexity of cases, the proper staffing issues. We can see through this kind of ongoing consultation what the impact then will be of the prosecutors that we have hired and will be hiring as a consequence of the Lavoie inquiry. I encourage this kind of proactive involvement by the union in what I consider a joint responsibility by management and the union to ensure that we meet the needs of the citizens of Manitoba.

I can also see that the focus of this group, which essentially deals with the issues I have outlined in a general way, is not necessarily restrictive but in fact could take in other issues as the need arises. I know that in fact was the approach taken in the Headingley situation, where as issues arose, Mr. Scurfield, as the chair, brought those issues forward or brought them forward through one of the parties at that table.

So, again, I am very pleased that this committee has been formed. I think it is part of the ongoing analysis to ensure that our resources are adequate for prosecutors to meet the need, and this particular situation where we have some movement within the department and out of the department, I think this is a very good time to bring that subject to this type of an organization.

So I think the article in the newspaper seems to indicate that there is some disagreement between management, including myself, and the Crown attorneys of the need for ongoing analysis of resources to ensure that we do not find ourselves in the position, for example, that Ontario or British Columbia find themselves in today. I know that the Ontario department has various concerns and issues that they need to meet. In reading *The Globe and Mail*, the NDP government in B.C. has serious problems on its hands

in respect of delay. When you look at our figures, in terms of availability of court dates, we compare very, very favourably. I hope that, with the appointment of these two recent Provincial Court judges, we will continue to be in a position where we can keep workloads moving along and not overburdening our Crowns, but I think that we have to keep on talking to our Crown attorneys about that.

As I understand Mr. Hannon's comments, I do not think he—and again, perhaps I stand to be corrected—views management in this case as an enemy or not being co-operative. I believe he sees us in a supportive role, but that he needs to deal with concerns that his Crowns, the Crowns he represents, raise with him. So I do not know whether Mr. Hannon is committed to saying—it says that Mr. Hannon says that there should be a review. I do not know if that is in fact what his position is. It is my understanding that he simply wants a process that will deal with their concerns. I am certainly in agreement with him on that issue.

So I guess my concern about the particular newspaper article that has been referred to both here and in the House is that aside from being very, very misleading in terms of the number of vacancies that are in fact present in the department today, it seems to look at that there is some kind of a difference of opinion between the management and the Crown attorneys that cannot be reconciled. I know they have their particular position, their particular concerns, what their view is what an appropriate caseload is, and I know management has its position on that.

So, in conclusion on this question, I might simply say that I look forward to an ongoing relationship with the Crown attorneys association to ensure that the concerns that they do have are considered and, where valid, we address them in an appropriate fashion.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not know where the minister finds the article to have been misleading and I was looking at the—first of all, just going back to the numbers where we started out, there appears to be only a difference of two. We understood that there were four people going to Family Violence Court from adult and youth, and the minister is saying there are three. If that is wrong information, then so be it. At the same time though, the minister, in the House, is saying that

they are increasing the number of Crown attorneys in the Family Violence Court by at least that number.

The second discrepancy, there is one other person that we understand is leaving but maybe has not given notice yet or is in the process of doing that, so that explains that. But the numbers in the House of 15 losses, given that caveat is accurate, and that indeed Mr. Montgomery is a loss and although the position has been filled, it is a loss of a very experienced Crown attorney. It makes a lot of difference. As well, the secondment is a loss, although the minister says it is being filled by two terms.

The point is, and the essence of both the article and the information made by our side in the Legislature, 10 Crown attorneys have or are leaving the adult and youth divisions and seven of them, we know so far, have quit the department entirely. I do not want to get into one or two, because that is what it is coming down to because that does not make—it is a distinction without a difference. We have a serious challenge. I call it a crisis. I do not do so lightly when we have such a serious exodus from the adult and youth divisions.

Now I have heard allegations that in fact there is a disproportionate exodus from the youth division. We know that Mr. Wyant, Ms. Everett and Mr. Slough were all in the youth division. We know that it is a particularly challenging area. Manitobans are very concerned about youth prosecutions. Would the minister tell the committee how many individuals have either given notice or have now left the youth court out of the total of the 10?

* (1550)

Mr. Toews: Again, the member either wants to leave the wrong impression or does not know. I prefer to believe he does not know. Let us deal with some of these positions.

For example, Cathy Everett was not from youth prosecutions. [interjection] Now the member says not lately. Well, I am not from constitutional law lately either, and I left there, not lately. So she was a general prosecutor. The member knows this. He is being, I think, simply loading the statistics one way to make his case, but it is not a very good way to make his case.

Ray Wyant, again, not from the youth division. Originally, he was, but he is an acting director. We know that Mr. Slough is coming back, who is a very senior prosecutor. [interjection] Well, we do not know what he is coming back as, but certainly he has a lot of youth experience and that experience is valuable.

Ms. Kopynsky, again, a very senior prosecutor and is coming back in September when that inquest or inquiry wraps up, and that is our general indication at this time now. September 25 is when they are coming back, so I do not know whether the inquiry is wrapping up or what. I do not know. I just understand that is the date.

I would also indicate that the fourth Crown in Family Violence, the permanent position, has in fact been hired and is working. That person came from the Public Safety Building and another person has been hired to replace her. The two term individuals were with youth prosecutions presently, and those positions will be filled when they leave. We do not anticipate any problem in that respect. I assume that my department will be looking for appropriately qualified people to fill those positions.

Again, a person coming from the defence bar may well fit very well into some of those positions. They certainly have youth experience in the defence bar and could well fit in there. Again, I am not suggesting that any particular criteria apply, but the staff, in hiring the Crown attorneys, will take a look at that particular issue. So, those are the only individuals, those two term positions are the only ones that I know who are coming out of the youth branch, and I understand that they will be filled.

I do not know how to explain this directly to the member that, yes, there is change in the department. Change goes on continuously in the department. I have a staff of probably somewhere close to 2,000 people or 1,800, 1,900 people, and change goes on continuously. If we look at the reasons for change here, I think some of the reasons are positive and not negative.

For example, the fact that two Crown attorneys are on the provincial bench, I think gives added strength to that bench, two more points of view on that bench. I do not see the appointment of two Crown attorneys to the provincial bench to be a loss to the justice system.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: This is just too important to let go. There is no reflection at all on the appointment of these two individuals. I did not at any time say this was a loss to the justice system. I said this was a loss to the youth and adult Prosecutions branches. That is a very important point.

I ask the minister not to misconstrue this and try and construe my comment as some attack or questioning of the appointment of these two judges. That is certainly not at all anywhere near where I was going.

* (1600)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Toews: Well, in fact, I would say that the appointment of these two people to this position is in fact of benefit to the justice system, including youth and adult Prosecutions, that these are people who are very knowledgeable about how the system works and will bring their youth and adult experience to bear in their decision. So, again, the portrayal that this is just a negative thing in terms of the department I think is clearly not correct.

The expansion of the Family Violence Court is somehow being portrayed as a negative thing.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the minister is now attempting to construe my remarks and twist them to suggest that somehow we have reflected on the growth of the Family Violence Court in a negative way. It has been our party on our side of the House—the minister knows this full well, that we have supported the Family Violence Court expansion. We have supported the Lavoie report. We have supported the establishment of that commission of inquiry and

very much pushed for it. We made presentations to it. We support the recommendation that has led to the growth of Crown attorneys and support staff in that court.

Our concern is for youth and adult Prosecutions, and I am sure the minister understands that. I think we have enough issues to deal with without fabricating some.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Toews: Well, if anybody is fabricating here, I think it is the member for St. Johns because, as I have indicated very clearly, the expansion of the Family Violence Court does not leave a hole in existing positions that is not being filled by what I would consider very, very competent people. The suggestion here being made by the member for St. Johns is that the transfer of these very capable people to this area is somehow a loss to the system. I would say that this is a benefit to the system. This is a recognition that we see how important this issue is to the people of Manitoba, and these are adults that are being prosecuted in adult court by prosecutors with tremendous experience. How can this be portrayed as something bad or improper?

The member seems to suggest as well that it is only Crown attorneys who have previously served in the department that can fill these holes, if there is a vacancy. That is simply not correct. That is doing a grave injustice to the private bar out there. There are many, many lawyers in the private bar who could walk into a Crown attorney's position and do a very, very good job with the appropriate supports, almost overnight. We have very competent people in the private bar.

I mean, I am speaking as a past Crown attorney, and I have a real pride in having been a Crown attorney and serving my province in that capacity, but I also acknowledge that simply moving a Crown attorney into an area where we can take full advantage of his or her expertise does not mean that if you cannot find another Crown attorney with 10 years of experience, or five

years of experience or even less, a private lawyer could not do the same thing.

I can tell you that one of the things I have always envied about private defence lawyers is their ability to cross-examine. It is not an opportunity that Crown counsel often have a chance to develop, because it is the Crown that has to put in the case, and they are restricted to examinations in direct and so very few Crown attorneys in the course of major trials would get an opportunity to cross-examine. I know that they, in fact, do do that whenever they can and they do a very good job. I have read transcripts from some of these Crown attorneys and I am very impressed but, on a day-to-day basis, a defence lawyer learns to hone that skill because he or she is constantly challenging the Crown's case.

So, in my opinion, bringing a defence lawyer into that kind of a context where they already know how a Crown counsel puts their case in direct but then to have the added advantage of years of cross-examination skills certainly brings a real benefit to the department.

So the implication here that, because a well-experienced Crown attorney moves out of one area and is put to another and we would go to the private bar to fill that position, that person somehow is not as good or is not as worthy of that position is an impression that should not be left on the record. I simply do not agree with that. I think that many defence lawyers, given the opportunity, would love to become Crown attorneys and so this kind of movement in the department and indeed expansion within the department is a wonderful opportunity to bring new ideas, new techniques, new skills into the department.

So we see now that we have some very capable prosecutors within the department who are moving into what they may consider more challenging roles or at least different roles because I guess the same argument could be made. What does an adult or youth prosecutor know about family violence?

And so, I guess a criticism could be made that well, these lawyers should not be put into Family Violence Court because they do not have family violence experience. I am not denying that there is an obligation on government to make changes to ensure that

resources are there, supports are there, training is there, but I see this kind of a movement as a very positive one.

I view with some regret the fact that the federal government was able to hire some of these senior people away from us, especially I know Mr. Pat Flynn, who for a number of years was a hearing officer when the government experimented with hearing officers. He left the Crown's office, as did other Crowns, to move into that position, stayed in that position for a while and I think, again, a very healthy thing to do and then came back to the department and has now prosecuted for I imagine another five, six years again. So, again, I am kind of sad to see him go, but I think a change is good. I think the opportunity that sometimes we cannot give in terms of change, he has seen this expansion of the federal prosecutions function as a unique opportunity that he now has the ability to take advantage of and he will do so.

I know that, when I started with the Crown attorneys office back in 1976, the real challenge at that time was the Alberta government hiring away lawyers and many of them did leave. They left from the federal department. I know they courted people in the Brandon office where I was stationed and flew them all over Alberta trying to convince them to come to Alberta. Many of our Crowns did leave at that time. The reason many of them did was for money at that time and also for challenge. It is something that goes on.

I noticed that this is not an issue that is unique to the field of law. In speaking with the Winnipeg Police Association and the Manitoba Police Association on Saturday, they indicate to me that Alberta has come along and scooped at least four or five police officers out of Brandon. Now four or five officers out of Brandon, they have a police force of 50. So one-tenth of their force is being taken. That is not indicative of a morale problem necessarily or any other issue. People often change.

I guess one of the concerns now that I have been reading about is—I spoke to the RCMP commissioner at a recent graduation, and it was either in a conversation with him or one of the assistant commissioners or inspectors, he indicated that over the next five years, one-half of the serving RCMP officers in Canada are

eligible for retirement—over the next five years. So it would not be unusual to see a massive flood of retirement of RCMP officers who would then go on to other jobs because many of them are still very, very young, but that is no reflection on the RCMP. These are personal choices that people make.

* (1610)

Similarly with the Winnipeg city police, I read an article just recently that next year, even though generally speaking there are about 50 to 60 retirements every year, which is about, what?—5 percent of the police force, 4 percent to 5 percent of the police force, next year they anticipate having about 120 people eligible for retirement, just simply eligible—[interjection] 121 the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) indicates. Given his history with the police, I understand why he added that number.

That is one-tenth of the Winnipeg city police force that would be eligible for retirement. These people, just because they are retiring, does not mean their careers are ended. Indeed, my special assistant who came over from the Winnipeg city police is an excellent example of how I benefited from the expertise that the City of Winnipeg has paid for over 25 or more years.

So here, at the end of his career, I get the benefit of Mr. Haasbeek's invaluable advice. [interjection] That is right. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) says the constituents of The Maples are getting the benefit of probably both his Winnipeg city police training and his training here in the Legislature.

So, again, I do not view this as a negative thing, but again, harking back to the answer that I gave in respect of the article that was written, I do not believe it reflects the true nature of the relationship between the Crown attorney's association and the senior officials of the Department of Justice. I have only known Mr. Hannon to be a positive, hard-working individual who, in addition to the responsibilities he has as head of this particular union, also carries a full load in the Legal Services branch. I believe one of his areas of expertise is aboriginal law and does a lot of Northern Affairs and Native Affairs work. He used to in any event, and I think he still moves in that area.

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Again, all I am saying is that this is an individual who I know wants to work with government to ensure that the issues that he deals with and that have been raised as concerns are dealt with by government. So I would certainly welcome any statement that he has to make that would outline his concerns so that we know those concerns very, very clearly. Whether he chooses to do that in a public forum or whether he chooses to do that at this committee, which he in one way or another will be a part of, I think that kind of a document, a letter, a statement of position would be very, very helpful. Not to say that they are critical of government but simply to outline what their position is, and I would hope that any public statement—and I am saying this publicly—that underscores what I believe they want is that a continuation of dialogue and working together, then that can happen.

So, again, the newspaper article, in my opinion, does not represent that ongoing relationship and work that has been done between the association and senior officials in my department, but I believe that the process that has been agreed to by my senior staff and the association will in fact take very seriously any concerns that they have and work together in terms of resolving them.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well then, how does the minister reconcile his position with that of his Leader, who I understand today on radio expressed a sentiment that there should be an operational review of the Prosecutions branch as a result of this exodus?

Mr. Toews: I do not know if we are quibbling about words here. I would certainly like to see the transcript that the member refers to. We have, on an ongoing basis, reviewed the operations of the Department of Justice. I have indicated that, as recently as May 26, as a result of a number of meetings that they have had, they have established a group to look at outstanding issues, including resourcing. Now, if that is what my Leader, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), has indicated, I guess we are in agreement because I certainly agree with that approach. If there are additional matters that the Premier thinks should be addressed, I am certainly willing to discuss that issue with him. So we may well just be quibbling about words here. The member says

we want an operational review. What does he mean by an operational review? Maybe if he gives me some hint, we can stop circling about words and deal with the issues that need to be addressed.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think the minister is aware of the kind of operational review we have been calling for. The minister should be aware that, in both Saskatchewan and Alberta over the last year, operational reviews have been conducted. I look particularly to the one that was conducted in Saskatchewan by two former Crown prosecutors from the province of Saskatchewan who I believe both had moved to the province of Alberta as private counsel, or maybe perhaps they are still in Saskatchewan. As I recall, that was a description of how that was done. It was done by two individuals from outside of government and made recommendations and resulted in rather sweeping changes in the department, both in terms of the number of prosecutors and protocol and I think technology. Alberta, I cannot recall right now who did that review. I believe it was done by someone or an organization outside of the Department of Justice.

The other option obviously available to the minister is that he have someone—I was thinking perhaps of someone of the calibre of Hymie Weinstein, for example. That is just one person, for example, who had been a Crown prosecutor in the past and is involved in the criminal justice system. That is the kind of review we are looking at and the scope should be to look at the resources for prosecutors, the technology, the use of computerization, for example, how the filing system is maintained, how communications are maintained, looking at the organization of the department and in a very important vein, looking at the protocols. I think, for example, of the Court of Appeal's lashing of the handling of the Torres' matter. I think that calls out for a review of the protocols in the office and that one there would be with regard to expediting appeals of conditional sentences in circumstances similar to that of Fabian Torres's conviction. That is the kind of operational review that we have been calling for, and the key there is that it be done outside of the department so that there is someone who can come in and look at it.

I know the minister has been open to this kind of review in the recent past. I look, for example, at the

review of victims services in Manitoba by Prairie Research Associates that the minister or his predecessor contracted for. I think of the recent study of the Law Enforcement Review Agency that the minister contracted for. The minister knows the value of that kind of external review. It is then done in partnership with people in the department and calling on people in the department, in this case in Prosecutions, particularly youth and adult, to provide their opinions on how things are going. It is important that the staff be able to speak out, speak to someone that they know will treat their information as confidential, but will then comprise part of a comprehensive review. There is too much at stake here. Public safety is at stake. Victims are at stake. Again, we ask the minister to get such a review going and do so now. I will just add that it was, coincidentally, one year ago yesterday that we first called for such a review, reiterated a call for such a review on a regular basis since.

* (1620)

Mr. Toews: I will be getting some information on that particular issue because I think it is an important issue, because an operational review was done in respect of the entire criminal Prosecutions branch by the former assistant deputy minister, Mr. Fineblit, who did a very extensive review in terms of screening courts, in respect of the assignment of Crown attorneys to files, in respect of computerization and technology and the use of that technology, and the implementation of that is still proceeding on an ongoing basis. I know that the Crown attorneys association is very interested in the technology aspect to assist them in their work. So, in many respects, that has already been done.

I mean, I am very familiar with the Saskatchewan review and both individuals who did that review. I know the member has called for us to hire those two individuals from time to time, and there may well be need for them from time to time. They are both very, very excellent prosecutors. Mr. Peter Martin was a Crown attorney in Alberta for many, many years, did most of their major murder trials. The story goes that he never lost a murder trial. I do not know if that is correct or not, but he was certainly a very, very effective prosecutor, and I have the highest respect for Mr. Martin. I have seen him on occasion and discussed matters with him on occasion. I have not had any

discussions with him personally since I guess a couple of years ago. I am certainly aware of his reputation. I am also very familiar with his colleague, Mr. Earl Wilson, who is also an Alberta prosecutor for many, many years. Rather than doing the murder trials, he did a lot of the appeal work. Again, very, very qualified people. So I have no problem with the quality of those two people. I would have some concern bringing a local lawyer in here to review the office. There are some issues, I think, that are best done by—if it is not inside people in the department doing it, it is better to have somebody outside of the very small legal community that we have here.

I know the Free Press called for an inquiry at one time and wanted us to hire a lawyer who was in fact the husband of the lawyer making the accusations against the department. Again, you know, it seems that—and I am certain the Free Press did not do that on purpose, but the legal community here is so small that, despite the fact that there are 1,600 lawyers, it seems that everybody is either related to somebody or knows somebody. [interjection] Well, I do not know who Hymie is related to but I know he has a lot of connections. [interjection] That is right.

But, you know, you have to look at the law firms that these people are involved in. It is getting to be that every time you hire a lawyer, you have to worry about who they are related to or where the connection is and whether there is a conflict. As the number of lawyers increase, ironically, the problem increases rather than diminishes.

I do not know whether it is part of the story or the truth, but they have always said, especially in small towns, that if you have one lawyer, there is just enough work for that lawyer. If you have two, you have work enough for three. This situation has a way of expanding work for lawyers, and we have to be very careful before we bring outside people into the department, especially in Winnipeg here. We have the same problem when we have prosecutions, when a person who is well known to the department suddenly is faced with criminal charges. Is it appropriate for a criminal prosecutor from Winnipeg to do it.

I know that when I was a prosecutor, one of my first matters that I was assigned to was looking at a file

involving an RCMP officer. I guess, I was the low man on the totem pole, and I was told to make recommendations. I recommended charges, and that is probably something I would not do again. Not that I would not recommend charges, but put myself in the position of recommending charges against a person that I would then have to work with in the future. I think the department has become quite sophisticated in dealing with those issues.

So we have to be very careful. I know that Allen Fineblit was a real benefit to us because he came from Legal Aid, and for a two-year period. It was his stated intentions that he would go after two years. Certainly he told me that from time to time, and I believe he told other members that that was his goal, two years, and then he would be moving on. But he was able to bring an insight into the department and administrative skills that we did not necessarily have in the department in the same way. We have good administrators. We have good skilled people, but he brought an outsider's view.

Allen Fineblit, for example, what he has done over in Legal Aid is truly remarkable. He is recognized, or certainly Legal Aid Manitoba is recognized as probably the best legal aid system in Canada. Indeed, many people refer to it across the world. There was a committee meeting, I think in England, where they specifically referred to Manitoba's Legal Aid system and the very delicate balancing of private and public resources.

Just getting specifically back onto the technology issue, I do not want to spend too much time on that, but I know that there are funds included in the budget for technology. There are systems designs issues and business cases in progress dealing with information for Prosecutions, and there are a number of subcommittees that have been active in collecting information from prosecutors and exchanging of information with police agencies, courts and corrections.

I believe the acronym for this program is PRISM. I am not sure what it stands for. Prosecutions Information Scheduling and Management system, I believe that is what the acronym stands for, but again that initiative is exactly what the member is referring to.

* (1630)

We are doing these things and we are doing these on an ongoing basis. It is not that we have heard the member's call for an external review and then said: oh, well, we are going to ignore it. We do not ignore it, and you know, frankly, I would not put somebody like Earl Wilson or Peter Martin into the situation where they would be giving us information about these kinds of technical things.

If you read the report and know who they are, you recognize that their strength—well, certainly from the report, I am not going to comment. Maybe they have acquired other skills over the years, but it would not necessarily be in systems design. I think there are government people or other consultants who could do a very, very good job for us in there, so I am not ruling out external people.

We brought in an external person in the Headingley situation, Mr. Scurfield, at the recommendation of Mr. Hughes. And I think one of the reasons why Mr. Hughes recommended Mr. Scurfield, and I do not know if it is in the report but it is sort of what you grow to know as a result of living in this community, is that there clearly were tensions between management and the union in the corrections situation that did not lend itself to a committee being chaired by either management or union.

So Mr. Scurfield, in conducting his review and essentially it is a review, it is a very unique way of doing a review, but in conducting his review has been able to make tremendous progress. But I do not think, knowing the Crown attorneys association as I do and knowing Mr. Hannon as I do, I believe he has very specific concerns.

I imagine some of those relate to workload. I believe that, because I know it is an issue that has been ongoing in terms of the discussion, but I do not necessarily believe that we require an outsider to come and share that kind of a meeting. So I am not rejecting the call for some kind of an outside review of the department because I do not like outsiders meddling in departmental business. We have demonstrated over and over again that we are prepared to bring outsiders into the department to look at it, but I believe, that both the association and the Department of Justice, if we know exactly what the concerns are, I mean it would be

ideal to have it all on a piece of paper to say: these are the concerns that the association has, these are the concerns we would like to see addressed in a meeting.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I would not view that kind of document as a threatening document. I would view it as a very good way of putting exactly on the table what the association's concerns were so that there is no mistaking what they want or what management needs in respect of this issue. I think one of the real unfortunate matters—and this is maybe something that should be dealt with by the association as well—there are constant references to Crown attorneys dropping the ball in certain cases, and yet all of these cases I have discussed, well, I would not say all of these cases, but most of these cases I discussed the actual case with the Crown attorney and I said: is this an issue of resources? And the Crown attorney has indicated: no, it is not an issue of resources. So on these particular cases where opposition members have been saying they have fumbled the ball because of a lack of resources, often it has not been an issue of resources, if ever.

I know that the member for St. Johns has indicated that the Crown mismanaged the appeal of the Fabian Torres matter. Well, the same Crown attorney that he spoke of very highly and who has now gone to the bench, Catherine Everett, was a Crown attorney who did that. I am convinced that without that hard work by that Crown attorney, we would have never been able to achieve what happened.

There are many things that I cannot talk about, but I know the length that that Crown attorney went to in order to achieve a murder conviction and, I believe, three manslaughter convictions out of that. What was the evidence? The evidence was gang evidence. How do you get convictions when everybody is a member of a gang? Yet this Crown attorney did it, and when I asked her about that particular case, was it a resourcing issue, that was not the issue.

An Honourable Member: Protocol.

Mr. Toews: No, it was not an issue of protocol. There were many other issues. But to suggest that it was—[interjection] The member says two and a half months.

I have been involved in transfer applications that took much, much longer, transfer applications, transcript. Well, I do not know why it would have necessarily happened, but that generally does not happen. All I can say is that why ever there was a delay there, it was not, in my opinion, the fault of the Crown attorneys. [interjection] Well, I know that the member says the Court of Appeal blames the Crown attorney.

An Honourable Member: No, the Crown.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Toews: Well, the Court of Appeal blames the Crown. Now there was a Crown attorney who conducted that case on behalf of the Crown.

You know, I have the utmost respect for the Court of Appeal, but one of the things that the Supreme Court of Canada has told courts, generally speaking—and I always bear that in mind when I am quick to judge somebody. I know I do that from time to time, and I should not. But what the Supreme Court of Canada said in the Power case—I think it was a 1994 case—it talks about the role of the Attorney General, but it also talks about the role of the prosecutor and that courts should not second-guess why prosecutors do certain things.

You know, I am satisfied in speaking to that Crown attorney and knowing that Crown attorney that this was not a matter that that Crown attorney could be faulted, and so the Court of Appeal acts with certain information. They always say look, we can only give a decision on the information that we have. Sometimes they do not receive all of the information for a number of reasons. Some of those reasons relate to judicial independence.

So, Mr. Chairperson, while I respect the Court of Appeal making its decision—and I think they arrived at the correct conclusion in respect of Torres—there are other issues that perhaps they were not aware of. For example, I know of another case that the case appeared to fall apart because witnesses changed their mind, and that is a constant struggle in cases involving gang-related offences. I know that the Crown attorneys work hard with very difficult witnesses, very difficult situations.

* (1640)

I can tell you what would have happened in the Torres case if all of the gang members suddenly changed their minds, and the evidence was not there and the case against Fabian Torres could not proceed. Then I would have the member for St. Johns saying the Crown fumbled the ball, but that is not what happens in these cases. Crowns do not control the evidence. Crowns work with the evidence that they have, and they do a very, very good job in difficult circumstances, quite apart from the issue of resources.

So, again, I respect what the Court of Appeal has said. I think, though, that I personally would be very reluctant to second-guess a prosecutor in the decisions that they have to make on these cases. So the member for St. Johns, when he says, oh, here is another case where the Crown fumbled the ball, simply not correct. The member may not think that I actually listen to him. Actually, I do listen to him from time to time. Sometimes he comes up with something new, and I say, well, it is my obligation as a Minister of Justice to take a look to see what he is doing is in fact accurate, and so I go and I ask. Often I find that his statistics are not right or his interpretation of the facts is not right.

So in respect of the eight cases that he constantly refers to, I would like to see how he specifically thought the Crown should have done a better job, because it is very difficult for me to go back to a prosecutor and say, you know, there is a member of the Legislature in the House who says you fumbled the ball, or the Crown has fumbled the ball because of resources, or you did not cross-examine somebody, or you did not get a statement in. So I would like to know specifically what are the allegations in specific cases so that I do not back to my Crowns and say, look, we have got these vague accusations, and somebody says that somebody fumbled the ball, but nobody really knows what it is. The only thing that we know is that the result is that someone was acquitted.

Now there may be, in fact, a reason for an acquittal. The acquittal might be because the person was innocent. It is not just guilty people who are acquitted, but there are in fact innocent people who go through the process and are acquitted because they are innocent.

I remember one prosecutor facetiously once said—and I know that he was not a prosecutor here in Manitoba—convicting the guilty is not a problem, it is the innocent that is the challenge. Well, that is certainly not a philosophy that I would want to see any prosecutor in Manitoba adopt, because I think that if a prosecutor believes that someone is innocent of a charge, whether that charge has been laid or not, the prosecution should cease. We do not prosecute innocent people knowingly here in this province, and the system works when a judge says not guilty.

You know, there are other situations where I say the law is not working. One of the big concerns I have which relates very directly to the shooting of this young boy, Beeper Spence, and when I was a prosecutor many, many years ago, we had something called constructive murder. That is when someone participates in an activity which is known to be dangerous. For example, someone going in with a loaded gun into a bank to rob that bank, and a bank teller is killed, it is not just the person doing the shooting that is convicted of murder, but it indeed is the wheel man or somebody just watching who is also convicted of murder. Well, as a result of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision, the constructive murder sections in this country were struck down. So you cannot prove murder against these people any more unless you prove that very specific intent.

So, as I recall the situation in Torres, we had one shooter, and we had participants. But how much did they know, how much did they participate? Very difficult. So we received one conviction for murder, as I understand it, for the direct shooter, and three manslaughter convictions. Now, in my opinion, that is not an issue of the Crown fumbling the ball, that is a direct result of what the Supreme Court of Canada has said in respect of constructive murder and the striking down of Section 213.

Many, many American states still have constructive murder, and their prosecutors benefit from that presumption that constructive murder did for them in a case. So this is a matter that the Supreme Court of Canada has decided, has said it is unconstitutional, and yet the difficulties that it has created are immense. So hopefully that clarifies some of the points that the member has raised.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Court of Appeal speaks a lot louder than I do on Torres, and they were essentially saying the same thing I was about the delay. Of course they went on to address the reduction of the matter from second degree to manslaughter, and I mean, very strong words, as I recall, particularly by Justice Twaddle on that one. The concern I had all along—of course, I know the minister has misled the House on the concern of the Crown attorneys association, and their concern did not express any statement that I had misrepresented in any way what took place there.

What they did was explain that there was a motion by the defence moving into, I think, December for a pre-appeal, presentence report, because certainly by that time there was an argument that circumstances had changed for Mr. Torres. The critical problem in the Torres case was that we had the minister, and I believe our senior official in the department lamenting the conditional sentence provisions under the Criminal Code, and pointing the finger at that alone when Mr. Torres was arrested in the Gagnon home invasion in Ste. Anne.

I thought to myself, this is a rather inappropriate way to mount a campaign against the Criminal Code. I share concerns with the minister and senior officials about the conditional sentencing provisions on that. I think we shared some correspondence on that, but to really be believed on that one, if the government believed that Mr. Torres was a threat to the community when he was released, they had an obligation to expedite the appeal. What happened was we made inquiries and determined that the transcript could have been obtained within days. In fact, it had not been obtained for a period of four and a half months following the sentence.

The issue was never the timing of the filing of the notice of appeal, it was the processing of that. The Court of Appeal advised us of the—and then we went to the record and looked at the different filings and looked at the rules of the Court of Appeal there. I was quite concerned about what had occurred. My concern was not with the individual Crown attorney, who I have a high regard for and I know takes these matters very seriously and has also been involved in a lot of conferences and policy development with the government.

* (1650)

The concern here—and when I say the word “Crown” I mean the Crown in the organizational sense. It was the Department of Justice that dropped the ball here, because it did not have in place a protocol for expediting an appeal of a conditional sentence. That was incumbent on the government to have such a protocol in place. The Crown Attorney in that particular case was in a system that was not tailored to deal with this, and acted as I am sure she—you know, as would be the normal practice. The problem was the system, not the particular Crown attorney. There is no information that has come to my attention that would make me think that the criticism and the suggestion was inappropriate. The suggestion remains. I always try to couple—I think I have been doing that—criticisms with a suggestion for positive change. I take my role seriously here. I hope I can make some change in public policy as well as deal with individual issues. Perhaps those are one in the same, often, but I think it is important that the minister look to see if he can implement a protocol as soon as possible to expedite appeals in circumstances like this.

That is not to take away, as well, my real concern about the decision of Mr. Justice Schwartz. I did not understand that decision; I read it carefully. I know at the time he made the decision, he pleaded with the government for electronic monitoring of this individual, which to me, he was saying this person was a threat to the community, please put electronic monitoring on him. He made that comment, of course, knowing that there was not in place a policy or protocol for electronic monitoring in the province of Manitoba. So, you know, I have concerns about that. The way to deal with that concern, when you are the Department of Justice, is to expedite the appeal. It was not done. But I will let the Court of Appeal speak for that.

I would just conclude my remarks by, again, offering, and I would like the minister to take it in the spirit it is offered, to seriously consider a protocol to expedite such appeals, that this will never ever happen again, that the Crown attorneys will know that when there is a release like this—and does not even have to be restricted to conditional sentences—but where there is gang involvement known that the appeal be expedited. It was our information from the Court of Appeal.

Aside from the rules in the Court of Appeal, in terms of filing of the factums and the appeal books and so on, our information from the Court of Appeal indicated that the matter could have been heard within weeks, quite frankly, and that was information that was reiterated by the Court of Appeal decision. I think both Messrs. Justices Monnin and Twaddle both addressed that point—I think Mr. Twaddle in more detail.

My concern was that the delay, you know, almost threatened the appeal here. Thankfully the appeal succeeded, and justice is now being served. But I think it is a very important lesson, and in the meantime, the Gagnon family has suffered a terrible tragedy, perhaps because of Mr. Torres, I do not know. I presume he is innocent; we all do. He must be, but he was accused in there. I think it is just a lesson that we have to learn from and move on. The Torres matter was one incident among many, and I think I have brought every one of those incidents that have been of concern to the opposition to the attention of the minister.

I do not know if the minister wants to comment on our suggestion about a protocol, but in real estate, it is location, location, location. When it comes to public safety, it is timing, timing, timing. It is important that the Crown, the Prosecutions division acts swiftly when public safety is threatened in their own view.

Mr. Toews: Well, I find it very interesting, you know—and I do not want to reflect negatively on the court at all—that the member for St. Johns speaks so highly and acceptingly of Mr. Justice Twaddle's analysis of the situation, but I remember the same member criticizing Mr. Justice Twaddle for his decision in Bauder. So it just seems that the member sort of picks and chooses which one of Mr. Justice Twaddle's decisions he is going to accept.

An Honourable Member: Well, of course.

Mr. Toews: The member says, well, of course. Somehow the member says well, because in the Torres case, Mr. Justice Twaddle says something, we should all agree with that. But when Mr. Justice Twaddle says something in the Bauder case, we should not agree with it. So let us not appeal to authority. I say let us appeal to what the facts are. I would suggest to you that the facts that I am familiar with, that I am aware of, would

suggest that the Crown operated very appropriately in this case.

I defend what the Crown attorney did. The Crown immediately appealed the conditional sentence in May of '97, and it was the defence counsel who adjourned the matter and not the Crown. I cannot go into some of the details of what happened, but I can indicate very clearly on the record that the Crown only consented to the adjournment after it became clear, both that the adjournment was necessary, strategically necessary for successful appeal because of certain things and as a result of certain issues. I do not want to get into them, but I know that the Crown asked for earlier court dates, but it was a date of April 21 that was provided.

So I would suggest that there are many things that a Crown attorney cannot disclose to the court because it is not admissible, it would not be strategically prudent to do that, and so the court is left with its impression of the situation. That impression, and I believe I have heard judges say that, that we can only act on what we are given. Now I have been in certain courts where courts have said, when defence and Crown will come up and make a joint recommendation of five years, for example, on a sentence, the court will say, no, I am giving seven. That happens. So the court, I know and I think everybody knows, has a lot of discretion beyond what the Crown and defence state.

So, in this particular case, I would say though that the court acted on the basis of the information that it had. The Crown may well have had other information and other concerns. The criticism by the court of the Crown attorney for simply accepting a manslaughter in the one case may have been done for a number of reasons. I know it had been done for a number of reasons. We know that the courts have a certain role and the prosecutors have a certain role. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that the court should be very reluctant to second-guess prosecutors in their situation.

Now, getting back specifically to the issue of a protocol, I mean, there certainly is a procedure in dealing with these matters. We can certainly assume, in cases like this, based on the reorganization of the department, that where prosecutors will follow their cases through to the appeal, in high profile cases we

can ensure that our prosecutors more vigorously monitor those cases.

But I want to say there has been a change in philosophy. When I was a prosecutor, we did maybe the transfer to adult court, and then maybe somebody did the Queen's Bench trial, and somebody else did the appeal. I remember very specifically in a case involving a murder out of the Waywayseecappo Indian reserve, an accused by the name of Vince Clearsky.

I prosecuted Vince Clearsky in youth court, and he was transferred to adult court. I did the transfer hearing. I was asked—I was a first-year lawyer out, and I was asked if I wanted to do the murder trial. I said no; I did not think it was appropriate. I had never seen a jury trial, nevertheless done one. This was back in 1977.

So I worked together with another senior lawyer. That senior lawyer did the case, and we got a conviction for second degree murder. We believed it was a first degree murder, but the jury came back with a second degree murder. I cannot remember whether that is all that the person was committed on after the preliminary.

But, in any event, it then went to the Court of Appeal. I remember sitting—it was not my case anymore. It was somebody else's case, and the Court of Appeal said: there has been an error here. We can send it back for a new trial or we can impose a manslaughter conviction. I was sitting there as the prosecutor saying I will take that case back, but I could not say it because another prosecutor was up front and said we will take the manslaughter.

So, in that particular case, a manslaughter conviction was entered. A very heavy sentence was imposed for the manslaughter. I believe the sentence for manslaughter of that one was about 12 years, which is a fairly stiff sentence for manslaughter. I believed it was a murder, and so I lost my ability.

So one of the things that has changed in the last little while is that we will see prosecutors in important cases moving along with that case. I think that is important. I remember how I felt as a prosecutor. We cannot do it

in every case. I know that, but we can do it in some, and maybe in this kind of a case that is what we need.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Peter Dyck): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering 14.1(b)(1) on page 30 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I believe when the bells rang on Monday afternoon, we were talking about a trip that the minister had taken to Britain on behalf of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. There was some uncertainty as to the dates that the minister, and I believe the deputy minister, had been in London. My information, through Freedom of Information, was that those dates were October 12 through October 20, but the minister thought that perhaps those dates were not accurate. I wonder if she has been able to check that, and if the information is now available.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Yes, I was very pleased and honoured to have taken a trip, on behalf of our government and particularly the cultural and heritage community and also on behalf of immigration, to both London and Edinburgh in October.

The dates of that trip, in which a great deal of work was done on behalf of the province were leaving the city of Winnipeg on Sunday, October 12. I was in London until October 20. Following that, on that day, I went to Edinburgh and was in Edinburgh, returning to Winnipeg on October 25.

* (1430)

Ms. McGifford: I was perusing the schedule that I have for the minister and according to the information

that I have, the minister left on the 12th, as she said, and arrived on the 13th. Then I see that the minister attended an event on October 14, at 7:30 in the evening. Then, the next day—actually several events in the evening, and then on Wednesday, began working at 10:30 in the morning, Thursday, had a very full day, and Friday had a full day, too. I believe that Friday was the 17th of October. Then, I wonder if the minister could outline for us if there were events on the 18th and 19th of October as well.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would just take issue with a couple of the member's statements in terms of starting working as she said at 10:30. Quite wrong. That might have been the time of a first appointment. However, work was being done in the time that I was in Europe, and the days were very, very busy. They required preparation. There was briefing prepared for me, so that when I met with the individuals on my schedule I was very well prepared to discuss the issues with them, and then also present Manitoba in a general sense, as well, in terms of the other cultural activity, heritage activity or immigration activity, and then deal with the specifics that that group dealt with.

So, there was, in fact, a very busy trip, which I am certainly very happy that there has been now work continuing, now that we are back in Manitoba, on behalf of the cultural groups. Over that weekend, there were not appointments scheduled. The appointments that were scheduled were scheduled within the times people were available to meet with us, and then over that weekend there were not appointments scheduled. The next appointments then began when I arrived in Edinburgh.

Well, I will leave it at that for the moment, Mr Chairperson.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chairperson, I am actually just going from the itinerary that I received through Freedom of Information. I am certainly aware that one has to do preparatory work before going into meetings. I appreciate the minister making that point because I do understand that she did not just go into a meeting cold, that, as I said, some preparatory work would have been done. So I do not mean to imply, through my remarks, that the minister was having a gay old time and not working hard. I just wanted to put that on the record.

I wanted to ask the minister: since she did speak in her introductory statement about interviews with possible immigrants—I think she talked about a successful recruitment—I wonder if she could give me those details again. I think she identified a number of possible persons in the remarks she made in her introductory statement, a number of possible immigrants.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I believe in the opening statement I was speaking about some efforts that have been made in our provincial nominee program in a particular area in Manitoba which would be separate from any direct meetings that I would have had with those people. I did not have any direct meetings with those individuals while I was away. That work is done through the federal government immigration people at the centre.

However, what I did do on behalf of immigration, and I am very pleased to talk about, was, first of all, as I have tabled in the Legislature, an interview in what is called the Canada News, which goes to all commonwealth countries. We are making every effort in Manitoba to continue to increase our percentage of immigration to our province. We are very interested in immigration, both on the family-reunification side, also in terms of provincial nominees, and certainly we are also very co-operative and interested in accepting our refugee portion as well.

So, while I was there, I did the interview with Canada News in which Manitoba received at least three major articles, and the headline reading, Immigrants Urged to Consider Manitoba, in a large headline. That was one of the major initiatives. I then had the opportunity to meet in Canada High Commission with Mr. Ben Pflanz. He carries the title, minister of immigration and medical services division. That opportunity gave me a chance to talk about, again, and stress very strongly Manitoba's position on immigration, our desire to increase our proportionate share, to explain to him that Manitoba has signed the Canada-Manitoba immigration agreement, that Manitoba has made it clear to the federal government what our position is.

So I was very happy to have had the opportunity to work on behalf of immigration to Manitoba while I was

there at a major point of entry and also to have received the publicity which Manitoba received and that actually went to all commonwealth countries where anyone considering immigration or emigration from their country could see that Manitoba's doors are open and welcoming.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am glad that the minister mentioned the federal government immigration centre because I was wondering—I am assuming that the minister visited the federal government immigration centre—what the difference is between the work that the minister did whilst in London or whilst in Britain and the work that the immigration centres do in Britain and elsewhere.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the work that I did was on the basis of a promotional campaign to promote Manitoba as a particular destination, and the work of the people at the post is, in fact, to deal on a case-by-case basis with applicants.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to tell the minister that she may have tabled the document, but I did not receive it. Perhaps my colleague from Point Douglas did, and that is why I did not, but I did want to make that point for the minister.

I wonder if the minister could tell me how successful this recruitment program or how successful her efforts were in tracking immigrants to Manitoba. Do we have any measures as to how many people actually came after the minister was in London promoting Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is very difficult to tell the total impact at this point because I went on that promotional trip at the end of '97, so we do not have figures for 1998 at the moment. I can tell the member that we have had increased immigration from '95 to '96. We had a slight decrease at the end of '97, for the year 1997, but we are working aggressively to increase the number of immigrants again who come to Manitoba.

As I said, Mr. Chair, our overall goal, which has been communicated to the federal government, communicated to posts abroad, that we are very interested in increasing our proportional share.

* (1440)

The promotion and recruitment campaign has generated interest in Manitoba, with, I am informed, the following results. I can tell you that there have been, I am informed, 64 campaign client arrivals. This is again not directly as a result of that single visit and that the promotion and recruitment campaign that we have embarked on has generated well over 130 exploratory visits, and that also, while people are coming to explore Manitoba, certainly results in tourism days and tourism spending while people are exploring whether or not this will be their destination for immigration.

I can tell you also that the promotion and recruitment campaign has generated further results in Manitoba. I will just check the dates. We have been quite aggressive on this campaign, and for approximately the last three years, the results I have are: 374 individuals and family members landed in the province; 114 clients are presently visa'd to Canada; 2,191 clients are in the process of submitting an application for permanent residence to Canada. Clients are from 55 different countries of origin and, as the member knows though, countries of origin apply through a post. The number of posts by the federal government has, in fact, been reduced.

Manitoba has conducted 39 seminars abroad, including 2,484 selected participants, and the Manitoba promotion and recruitment home page has been widely accessed over 150,000 times and 7,000 Manitoba information kits have been distributed worldwide. So we certainly as a government have taken what we consider to be a very aggressive stand in terms of wanting to attract immigration. As minister, I am very pleased that I had the opportunity to directly go and to put our case before the High Commission in London and to make it very clear at that post abroad Manitoba's position.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, fascinating as all that information might be, I do not think it directly answers my question. The question was very specific. It asked what the results of the trip to London were in terms of immigration to Manitoba.

I think the minister did say initially in her answer, and I would have been satisfied with that, that the figures simply were not available. But I am asking a specific question because a great deal of public money

was expended on this trip and one of the reasons given for the trip was recruitment, was immigration and attracting immigrants to Manitoba. Therefore, I was interested in the specific results, in terms of immigration, of this specific trip. The history of immigration for the past three years, as I say, may be very interesting, but not really terribly relevant to the specific question that I was asking at this time.

So, to return to the trip. I wonder if the minister could tell me why her airfare cost \$3,879 and that of the deputy minister as well. It seems to me, I travel to Britain, being born in Britain, with some frequency to visit family, and I have never paid anything like that ever.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, again, this gives me an opportunity to speak very positively about how very pleased I am to have represented Manitoba on that trip to Britain, and how our government has taken the position of recognizing that there is work to be done on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Point of Order

Ms. McGifford: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I asked a specific question, and the minister does not have to answer that question, but she is also expected to be relevant to the question.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, on the same point of order, I certainly am relevant and will be relevant. I am making it clear to the member, just in relation to both questions that she asked, exactly the purpose and the reasoning, and then with that in mind, I will explain the airfare.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable member for Osborne does not have a point of order. I will ask the minister to continue in her answer.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, to continue my point in terms of setting the reasoning, part of the overall reasoning is

that our government has taken a very important view about Manitoba's position in the world, and also immigration is part, culture is part, as well. There is work to be done on behalf of Manitoba.

Manitoba's artists do not know any borders. In order to encourage immigration, to have a minister attend at a post abroad and to put the case forward for a province, I believe is important. It is true I do not have the exact numbers resulting from that particular visit to that particular point. However, by the end of '98, I expect we will be able to see the results, that we were certainly able to generate interest and publicity in our province. It is our wish and our hope and our effort that that will, in fact, increase immigration to Manitoba.

So the trip that we took was a business trip. It was a trip in which we had to leave and leave our families, as I have said earlier, on the Thanksgiving weekend. For me, it was also a very important family time which unfortunately I had to leave my visiting parents on their 50th wedding anniversary in order to arrive in London at the time that I was required to be there and be prepared to meet, in one of the first instances, with our ballet.

So there was not an opportunity to take advantage of ticket sales as some members can do for holidays when changes are not really a problem, when you are able to have a greater flexibility and when you take advantage of a ticket sale and can arrive and simply do whatever you want at the other end.

Mr. Chair, as ministers do, I travelled on business. I had an agenda, I had a time frame, and I am informed that was the cost of the ticket.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry that going to Britain for two weeks was such a hardship for the minister. Most of us would see it as a pleasure. I also am aware that the performance of the ballet—

* (1450)

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not think anything in my answer required the sarcasm in the member's voice or in the comments that she is making. The trip was obviously

an important one in which business was done. No one ever said at any point that it was not pleasurable and important to meet the people that I met there.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable member for Osborne, to continue, please.

Ms. McGifford: It occurs to me that the performance of the ballet was certainly well established, so I still do not understand why the ticket could not have been booked well ahead of time and the fare could not have been more reasonable. So I do not quite accept the minister's explanation. It will be up to the citizens of Manitoba to determine whether they do or not.

The minister has said that on the 20th of October, I believe, she travelled to Edinburgh?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct.

Ms. McGifford: The minister stayed four or five nights in Edinburgh?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, it was five nights, and I will make it clear on the record that the last night was paid for personally by myself because my husband who accompanied me was unable to get a flight home on the day that I would have liked to have travelled. This, I think, is really very important, because I took the issue of my trip very seriously and the issue of public money very seriously.

I can tell the member that at any opportunity I made it absolutely clear that personally, if it was required, I would pay for anything which I needed to, and I did on that evening. So when my business finished, and I was required to stay one extra day, that was at my own expense.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister would be willing to table the costs of her accommodation, food, expenses while she and the deputy minister were in Edinburgh?

Mrs. Vodrey: Though it is absolutely no secret, I would expect the member would use the same process, and that is the FOI process.

Ms. McGifford: I take it then the minister is unwilling to table her expenses and is directing me, if I wish to find this information, to find it out through FOI?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would think that FOI would be the usual way in terms of asking for that kind of information; however, if the member would like it, I will attempt to put it together for her and table it at a later date.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, yes, I would like to have that information. I would like to have the total expenses incurred by the minister and the deputy minister whilst the two were in Britain.

Under the expenses incurred in the portion during the time in London from October 12 to 20, I read that ground transportation was \$1,928.41. I certainly would not quibble about the 41 cents or even the \$28, but \$1,900 seems a lot of money for ground transportation in one week.

I wonder if the minister could tell me how that money was spent.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, while away, yes, we had a car which was provided for us, which we paid for, with a driver, which enabled us to get around the city of London to our appointments and to maintain a reasonable schedule in that time.

Ms. McGifford: So this money was spent basically within London or greater London and covered the cost of a driver and a car?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me if she stayed in Edinburgh or if she visited other cities or villages, towns, et cetera, in Scotland.

Mrs. Vodrey: In Scotland, Mr. Chair, I stayed in Edinburgh to do business. The one day that I went outside of Edinburgh was on the day in which I paid for myself and assumed all expenses.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister would tell me, please, in Edinburgh if she also recruited individuals, potential immigrants to Manitoba.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, no, I did not in Edinburgh because in the United Kingdom, for the countries who had come through the United Kingdom, London is the post.

Ms. McGifford: The minister tells us that she spent several days in Scotland and during that time she conducted business, but the business did not relate to potential immigrants. I wonder if the minister could sketch out for us today the nature of her business?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, I am very happy to explain and take another opportunity to speak about the importance of representing Manitoba and the people of Manitoba abroad, and in this case particularly in the United Kingdom and in Scotland.

Some of the work that I did—in this case, it did not relate to immigration, it related to arts, culture and heritage. Mr. Chair, I met with the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, one of the most famous fringe festivals in the world and had a great opportunity to inspect the information that they put forward, basically in a workbook form, that helps them year by year to continue to improve their festivals, set goals for the artists, set expectations for the artists, set expectations for volunteers. We had a very good opportunity to really see how this festival, which continues to grow, has been developed in Edinburgh.

All of that information was then brought back to Manitoba to be shared with our own Fringe Festival and to make sure, should anyone from our Fringe Festival wish to participate in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, that that information was clearly available, and also the other way around, if we wish to advertise or to have some participants who may have been in Edinburgh participate in Manitoba, that that was open to them. So that was actually a very interesting and very important opportunity.

I then had the opportunity to meet with the director and the chairperson of the Scottish Arts Council and to have a very good discussion with them about arts and how arts are managed, funded and encouraged within

Scotland. They have a setup somewhat different to Manitoba, and yet they were particularly interested in what was included within our Manitoba Arts Council and also to look at how the arts were funded and encouraged and supported in Manitoba.

I can tell you that each of these organizations was extremely pleased to meet with a minister responsible, and to have the minister directly come on behalf of our province and to explain directly about our arts and cultural community and to hear from them and to bring information back was actually very, very well received there.

* (1500)

I also had an opportunity to meet with the Scottish Records Office. This was a very interesting heritage opportunity because the Scottish Records Office is a very historic building, to start with, of which we had an opportunity to have a very good tour and then to meet with the keeper of the Scottish records. One of the interesting parts of that trip was that, as a keeper of records, as a manager of information, they are in the process of developing in Scotland their own freedom of information, protection of privacy act. He was very well aware of the legislation which had been brought forward last year and passed in this House, and I had an opportunity to talk with him in detail about our particular legislation and then to talk about some of our common interests.

There is a particular common interest as a result of the Hudson's Bay Company. So many of the original settlers through the Hudson's Bay Company were of Scottish origin, and so there was great interest on his part to talk to Manitoba about our heritage and also the organization of some of our heritage records. I can tell you that it was a very important and interesting opportunity.

I would also just like to take a moment to speak about our provincial archivists and also Sue Bishop, who has been at the table, because the keeper of the Scottish records, who associates widely on an international basis, actually knows Manitoba's provincial archivists and also Sue Bishop and made particular mention of these people when I was in Edinburgh. It was really a wonderful, proud

opportunity to see how very well the work done in our province is recognized abroad and to be able to bring that information back here to Manitoba and to feel, as well, that we had an opportunity to explain in person, again, to him, from the ministerial level, what was being done in Manitoba.

I also had an opportunity then to speak with the honorary consul for Canada while I was in Edinburgh. This was a very important time for him because, the member may know, at the time, it was the meeting of the Commonwealth leaders which was taking place in Edinburgh. Our Prime Minister was there, our Minister of Foreign Affairs was there, Canada was represented, and obviously, people from all of the Commonwealth countries.

So it was very interesting and important for us to have the opportunity to meet with the honorary consul to directly talk with him about issues and points of view in Manitoba. It is an opportunity that I have as Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship frequently to meet with consuls from around the world who make a visit to Manitoba, and this was my opportunity to pay a visit to the consul while I was in Edinburgh.

So, Mr. Chair, I had an opportunity to meet both formally and then had also some very good informal meetings where representatives of both the city and various parts of the arts community sat with us. We had a very good opportunity again to speak about how the arts is encouraged and what we can do, and what the interests may be between our two jurisdictions in terms of any co-operation or what we can learn from each other.

So the focus of my trip in Edinburgh was, as I said, mainly on the cultural and art side, as well as the heritage side.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, the minister has spoken about consultation and she has talked about the opportunity she had to do one thing and another and about the pleasures and about how interesting the experience was. I am wondering if there were more concrete results from this trip. For example, I do not know whether the minister was in a position to market Manitoba craft. That is what I mean by something more concrete.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, first of all, I make no apologies for the promotional part of the visit that I made because that is also a very important part of what I did. I was very pleased to take with me, as well, Manitoba: Its Culture and Its People and to use that document as a way to promote Manitoba.

However, I should have mentioned and I forgot to mention, that in Edinburgh I did have an opportunity to meet with a group—its name is called W.A.S.P.S., the Workshop and Artist Studio Provision, which is the major craft centre in Edinburgh. I was able to speak about what is happening in Manitoba, the value of our crafts industry to Manitoba, which actually is really substantial. It is almost \$30 million within our province, a province of a million people.

The interesting part, I just would like to say, in that visit is that in Manitoba, craftspeople do not have to cluster within the major city centres but can live anywhere within our province of a million people. This is very much the same kind of arrangements that are found in Scotland, and we found quite a lot of similarity between our two areas.

So in terms of Scotland and Clerkenwell Green in London, which was also a major craft centre, we have shared information from our visits to these artists' village with local arts groups. I understand that the artists in Manitoba are now looking at whether or not they would like to form an artists' studio similarly, and what kind of further communication on that will be done through our department.

Ms. McGifford: I have no more questions in this line.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 14.1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$452,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$74,200—pass.

Item 14.1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,238,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$257,800—pass.

Item 14.1.(d) Manitoba Film Classification Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$112,300.

Ms. McGifford: I do have a couple of questions on film classification. I wonder if the minister could tell

me whether classification is a service or whether costs are paid for classification.

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand that for film there is a cost; for video there is not a cost except for adult.

* (1510)

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me the cost of classification? Perhaps her staff would know how that compares with other jurisdictions across Canada.

Mrs. Vodrey: The cost of classification is two dollars per minute. I understand that it is competitive across the country, but I do not have those figures available to me here today.

Ms. McGifford: Can the minister tell me, please, why there is not a charge for videos other than adult videos?

Mrs. Vodrey: I just wanted to get a little bit of the history. My understanding, and I do not have a lot of background on this, is that at the moment the issue of classification is the main issue. The cost has not yet been a part of the issue. I have spoken about the video issue. The member and I spoke about it last year. I have spoken publicly since on that issue. So, at the moment, any kind of interprovincial classification system has really been what has been focused on at the moment.

Ms. McGifford: I am not really interested in an interprovincial classification system at this minute, although I think it would be a very interesting idea.

What I wanted to know is why there is a cost for classifying adult videos but not for other videos when there appears to be a classification fee for films regardless of the classification of that film.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand, just in addition, that a number of the videos we get are already classified because they have been paid for classified as film.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me the cost of classifying an adult video?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, \$2 a minute.

Ms. McGifford: By my calculations, we said it was \$2 a minute for a film and most films are approximately 120 minutes long, so that is a classification fee of \$240. I do not know how many films are classified a year, but leaving that aside for a minute, I do not know how many adult videos are classified a year—far too many for my taste, but anyway that is beside the point. I am interested in what happens to the classification fees. Where do they go?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed they go into general revenue.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me approximately how much money per year is generated by classification fees.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed approximately \$300,000.

Ms. McGifford: So the money generated by classification covers the money expended on the Film Classification Board, approximately, more or less?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: Is there a special licence fee for adult video premises?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, there is.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me what that fee is and, again, how it compares with other jurisdictions across Canada.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we do not have that information at the moment, but I will table it for the member the next time we are together.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry, is the minister saying she does not have information as to the cost of the licence or the comparisons with other jurisdictions?

Mrs. Vodrey: To be correct, we do not have either one in its absolute correct form. We will table both when we are together next.

Ms. McGifford: It just occurs to me that I know the minister and I have spoken about adult videos before.

We spoke about them last year, and I certainly voiced my distaste and, I think, my dilemma with the term “adult videos” because these so-called “adult videos” seem to me to be anything but adult. I was interested in the fee because it seems to me that one of the things that the minister might want to consider is raising whatever these fees are because it would seem to me that there might be public support for such a move.

But, since the information is not available, I will just leave it and perhaps move on to something else that I wanted to bring up, and that is the issue of video-game classification, which, again, the minister and I discussed in Estimates last year. I believe last year the minister told me that there was going to be a meeting in Ottawa regarding the classification of video games, and I wonder if the minister could inform me of the results of those meetings.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the chair has recently arrived back from a meeting. The result of the meeting among chairs is that there is no other jurisdiction who is looking at this issue at the moment, or is prepared to.

I understand B.C. has said that they are prepared to look at the industry classification which I have talked about again publicly and have said that the industry has tried to do that. So that seems to be the position of other provinces, and so it is somewhat difficult when no one else is really interested in the issue.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I would think that Manitoba could assume a leadership position, Mr. Chair, and I wonder if—the minister has told us B.C.'s position, or perhaps B.C.'s position—the minister has a position on the classification of video games.

* (1520)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, when this issue came up fairly recently as another issue, I was quite concerned about the content and was very, very interested in knowing what may be done across the country, and at the moment I have not had a chance to speak with the chair of the Film Classification Board about the details of the meeting. So I am, at the moment, not aware of why that decision may have been made by other provinces.

The chair of our Classification Board did go with my concerns and to look at what the interest would be across the country, but at the moment I have not heard what any of the reasoning was to have this rejected by other provinces. So before I put a position forward, I would like to hear from the chair so that she could tell me, again, further reasoning, and then we can look at developing our government position.

Ms. McGifford: Then would it be accurate to say that at this time the minister has concerns but does not have a position?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I said that I would wait until I had advice, further information from the chair, and then government would consider the issue with all of the information. So to say does not have a position may not sound exactly correct, but I am not prepared to articulate government's position yet until I have the further information, which I have asked for following the meeting of the chairs of the Film Classification Boards.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I look forward to hearing what position the minister may adopt. I am interested in knowing, and perhaps the minister can give me this information, I am a little unclear as to what the relationship is between the federal and the provincial government when it comes to classification. Perhaps I can get an answer. I wonder if the province has the right to classify videos on its own and of its own initiative. Pardon me, video games.

Mrs. Vodrey: It is my understanding that the province does have the right to provide the classification of video games, if they decide to move in that way. It is my understanding that no province does this at the moment, and that the federal jurisdiction extends when through the Criminal Code there is a case brought forward and the decision is that it is pornographic.

Ms. McGifford: I just wanted to share with the minister, information that I think I brought to Estimates last year, and that is that in Australia there is a system for the classification of video games.

I do not know whether the minister and/or her staff have had the opportunity to look into that legislation, but I just wanted to mention it again. Having said that,

I have no more questions with regard to the Film Classification Board.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 14.1. Administration and Finance (d) Manitoba Film Classification Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$112,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$188,400—pass.

Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (a) Executive Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$274,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$72,400—pass; (b) Grants to Cultural Organizations \$7,503,400.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask a couple of questions on Grants to Cultural Organizations. First of all, I wanted to ask the minister if the museum of Manitoba is funded through major operating grants.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is yes.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, somebody has brought to my attention some questions about conservation. Perhaps I could ask the minister those questions. This seems to be the appropriate time.

I understand that from 1980 to 1996 the Heritage Conservation Service provided conservation services across Manitoba, particularly to galleries and museums and that this service is no longer in existence because the government funding ended in 1996. Is that correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, yes, there was some reduction which I understand has been made up by HGAC, so that, in fact, the effect is that there has not been any reduction at the moment. However, the major partners—the museum, the Art Gallery, our Provincial Archives, ourselves, there have been meetings with the Heritage Conservation Service, and we are looking to work with the Heritage Conservation Service to make the services the most efficient possible and to look at any requirements to do that.

I understand that the meetings have gone quite well, that there have been a number of meetings in order to look at this and to try and make sure that everyone was involved who may have had a concern, and I understand that there is a proposal which will be

coming to me fairly shortly, in fact quite soon, to look at how this new process then will be in effect.

Ms. McGifford: Is the minister then assuring me that conservation in Manitoba is alive and well and will continue, and our heritage resources and our artifacts and museum pieces and paintings, statuary, et cetera, in our art galleries will be properly conserved?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is exactly why. The meetings have been held for exactly those reasons, because of their importance and because of the need to look at how conservation can be done in the most efficient way, who is best to do certain parts of it.

So I am very pleased that the work toward this new proposal has been ongoing, has been co-operative, and I will be looking forward to receiving that proposal.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I was told that because of certain cuts, the Manitoba Museum had cut the Manitoba Museum advisory services which had provided conservation and that these services were no longer provided. So I am pleased to hear that there is a plan and there is something in the works to take care of this. So I will certainly be talking to people in the community who have brought these concerns to me, and I hope that their concerns will be alleviated.

I understand, too, it is from the major agencies operating grant that the Winnipeg Art Gallery is funded.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is yes.

* (1530)

Ms. McGifford: I understand about 50 percent of the Art Gallery's budget comes from the province. I also understand that the province has representation on the Art Gallery's board, and I wanted to ask the minister, first of all, who her representative is, and secondly, if this person has discussions with the minister, if there are any duties that accompany this appointment or whether this person is entirely a free-lance person.

Mrs. Vodrey: I believe the member asked the names of the government-appointed members. The members are Judy Sutherland, Jacqueline McIvor, and Gordon Gage. I have not met with these members nor given

them any specific purpose or task on the board—have not met with them on this issue specifically.

Mr. Chairperson, Ben Sveinson, in the Chair

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I wondered if the minister had the right to give these members any specific instruction or request of them any duties or whether these appointments, as I said, are entirely free lance in the sense that the individual is completely free to make his or her decisions at the board level.

Mrs. Vodrey: The member's question is does the minister have the right? I understand that it is not legislated; therefore, that would be very difficult to determine. Basically, my view has been that we try to appoint good members who have an interest and who have a contribution to make to the board and that those people then act with their expertise as board members.

Ms. McGifford: I do not mean to pick on the Art Gallery at all, but I wonder if—I choose the Art Gallery as an example, in fact, but since the Art Gallery's budget, 50 percent of it is funded by the province, I just wonder what the accountability mechanism is.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Art Gallery files its annual report with us. They provide us with quarterly cash flows, and there is an ongoing working relationship between the Art Gallery and the staff of the Department of Culture.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry, did the minister say the Art Gallery provides her with a quarterly cash flow?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is provided to staff.

Ms. McGifford: Last year, I think I congratulated the Art Gallery on its free Wednesdays, and I wanted to reiterate that congratulations. It seems to me very important that a publicly funded body, or so much of it is publicly funded, like the Art Gallery, does stay open for the public because there are many individuals, of course, who want to visit the Art Gallery and cannot afford the entrance fee.

Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister could tell me please why hospitality grants are no longer a part of this line.

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand it was a year ago that budget line—not this year, but last year—was eliminated, and that money was then reallocated throughout the department.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me please why it was eliminated?

Mrs. Vodrey: As the member sees, the dollar amount was, in fact, very small. It was then more efficient to reallocate. Under the line Community Initiatives in this year's budget, if there is a requirement for hospitality, it can be considered on a case by case and can be considered through that budget line.

Ms. McGifford: During the Portage by-election last year, the minister announced that the province would, I quote, handed over a \$400,000 cheque to the Portage Community Centre.

I wonder if the minister could tell me if that amount of money comes from somewhere in this budget line.

Mrs. Vodrey: That money came from our capital budget '97-98.

* (1540)

Ms. McGifford: I have no more questions in this particular line.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2.(b) Grants to Cultural Organizations \$7,503,400—pass.

Item 14.2.(c) Manitoba Arts Council.

Ms. McGifford: I am certainly pleased to see that the MAC grant has increased. I am always pleased to know that there is more funding available in the arts community, because I know the minister agrees with me: we owe these people so much, both communally and individually.

I wonder if the minister could tell me who the new executive director of the Manitoba Arts Council is or whether one has been appointed.

Mrs. Vodrey: They are currently undertaking a recruitment and they have not made a decision yet.

Ms. McGifford: One of the questions I have been asked by members in the community is that they are wondering—some of the individuals I have spoken to would like to know more about the process and decision making that sees money moving from the Manitoba Arts Council into the hands of arts groups and artists.

Particularly, I am wondering if there is a funding formula. How is a decision made, for example, out of this total amount of money that we see listed here? How is it decided how much money goes to dance, how much goes to theatre, how much to literary arts, visual arts, music? Is there a funding formula?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the Manitoba Arts Council develops a general budget and then works based on applications submitted. The operating grants are determined by the council, and the project grants are determined in a juried fashion.

Ms. McGifford: There is no formula that determines—I am just drawing figures out of the air, but that 25 percent goes to theatre and 30 percent to dance and so much to another one of the arts.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is that there is not a formula, that there is some variation year by year based on some of the requirements, based on the applications.

Ms. McGifford: I notice that the Manitoba Arts Council awards operational funding to certain groups. I wonder how new groups might come to qualify for this kind of funding.

Mrs. Vodrey: New groups would make an application, as would others. That application would be assessed. I understand that the Manitoba Arts Council then does a review also of their granting, where they have granted each year, and then they look to see what the outcome is and then they have to weigh the applications each year as they come in.

Ms. McGifford: The minister seems to be implying then that organizations, or that certain organizations, do not receive year after year as part of their operating budget certain sums of money but that it is something that they need to reapply for every year and are never sure of getting. Is that the case?

Mrs. Vodrey: All clients do apply annually but some clients receive only project funding. Where it is project funding, then it is not a guarantee year by year because it is a juried process.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister would be willing to arrange a briefing session for me with the Manitoba Arts Council.

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand the member has had meetings at other times and that is not a difficulty for the Arts Council, so I will be pleased to do that.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no more questions there.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2.(c) Manitoba Arts Council \$7,317,300—pass;

Item 14.2.(d) Heritage Grants Advisory Council \$580,000.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am just housekeeping. I wonder if the minister would forward to me or have her staff forward to me a list of the Heritage grants, or the most recent list.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I will do that.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2. (d) Heritage Grants Advisory Council \$580,000—pass.

Item 14.2.(e) Arts Branch (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$542,600.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to thank the staff in the Arts Branch for preparing a complete list of grant assistance of the organizations receiving these grants. It was extremely helpful and I take this opportunity to request the same kinds of lists for 1998-99. Now, having said that I received a complete list of grant assistance, I want to add that I did not receive a list of film support grants. I do not know whether this is because these grants are delivered through the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation, but I wonder if I might have a list of those grants for '97-98 and then for '98-99.

I know that last year the minister told us in Estimates that she would soon proclaim The Manitoba Film and

Sound Development Corporation Act. I know that it received Royal Assent on November 19, 1996. I think I have that date right. Anyway, last year the minister said that in the very near future she would appoint a board. My understanding is that a year has passed and the act has not been proclaimed and a board has not been appointed, so I wonder if the minister could explain why.

Mrs. Vodrey: This is a really important board that I want to put in place. I think it is very important to the industry, so the industry was asked to submit names. Names had come forward, and then some names appeared to be ineligible because they would have a direct conflict in terms of being someone who may receive a grant or receive a benefit.

So, in the intervening time, I went back to the industry again, I asked for some further names. Then I thought I had—and I am, in fact—I just will tell the member, to make it short—very close, but occasionally, then, as I was prepared to bring it forward, other conflicts appeared in terms of names that had been recommended, people going into various businesses.

So I can tell the member that there has been a lot of active work done on this, and I believe that I am very close to being able to name that board.

* (1550)

Ms. McGifford: Well, I am pleased to hear that because, as I said, it is a year ago, and my understanding is that the purpose of the Manitoba Film and Sound—I always get the name wrong—Film and Sound Development Recording Corporation was to create a situation not dissimilar to that of the Manitoba Arts Council with regard to the arts community. That is to say it would be an arm's-length board and therefore not directly linked to government. I am wanting to know, in the interim, how are funds being disbursed, who makes the decisions, et cetera.

Mrs. Vodrey: Though it is taking some time to get the right board in place for the new corporation, I want the member to know that a great deal has, in fact, been going on in that particular area of the industry. To answer the funding question, we have a contribution agreement, and then the funds flow and are distributed

by their current board. I would like to say that the industry itself has been working very hard and really is a success story in Manitoba. They just continue to actively promote Manitoba.

Mr. Chair, I understand the film and sound industry has been estimated to be approximately \$20 million in 1997, and they are estimating that they will be at approximately \$45 million by the end of 1998. They are actively marketing the tax credit, and I think that there is quite a lot of evidence of the vibrancy of this industry.

It is an industry that we are very, very proud of. It is an industry that Manitoba is making every effort to assist, and I will be looking forward to naming that board in the very near future.

Ms. McGifford: The minister used the expression current board, and I am not quite sure what she means. I would also like to know who the persons sitting on this current board are.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that it operates at the moment as a regular nonprofit three-person board, and I have been checking the names. We believe these are still currently the people who are operating as the board members: Carole Vivier, Tom Kormylo and Lisa Collins.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, does the current setup then differ at all from the situation that prevailed before we passed the legislation in November 1996?

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is no. There have not been changes since that time.

Ms. McGifford: So things are the same, but the minister is looking forward to proclaiming the act, to appointing the board, and we should be looking forward to that in the very near future.

I wonder if Manitoba Film and Sound has an annual report and if I might receive a copy of that report, the most recent report.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is, yes, they do, and I am happy to provide that for the member. I do not have a copy today, but I will see that you get it.

Ms. McGifford: Does Manitoba Film and Sound have a funding formula with regard to commercial versus noncommercial production?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are not aware that it has. We can check though.

Ms. McGifford: I would appreciate that very much because I think it is very important to protect our small film makers and to encourage our small film makers, especially individuals who are just beginning their work. So I would be very interested in knowing what the funding formula or policies are in that regard.

The next question I want to ask is perhaps a question that I should ask of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and I am sure the minister will tell me, but it was in relation to the tax credit or labour rebate. I want to know if it applies to all productions going on in Manitoba, because it seems to me that there are many non-Manitobans working on film. So I was interested in knowing the answer to this question.

Mrs. Vodrey: It may not apply to all. It applies to those who apply for it and actually meet the qualifications.

Ms. McGifford: So, Mr. Chair, if non-Manitobans are brought in to work on a film crew, does it apply to those persons?

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is no.

Ms. McGifford: So it applies only to persons who live in Manitoba.

Mrs. Vodrey: At the moment, it is currently based on Manitoba labour.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister then tell me the definition of a Manitoban?

Mrs. Vodrey: The member's questions are becoming fairly technical, and in that way I would prefer that she ask them to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). However, I can tell you that in terms of the tax credit, Manitoba-based corporations which pay no less than 25 percent of salaries and wages to Manitobans may apply for a fully refundable corporate income tax credit based

on the lesser of—and the member has probably seen this—35 percent of eligible salaries paid to Manitoba residents during the taxation years '97, '98, '99, and the first 60 days of the year 2000, or (b) 22.5 percent of total production costs of the eligible film incurred after December 31, 1996, and before March 1, 2000.

Total production costs must be net of government assistance, and the corporation must be a taxable company incorporated in Canada with a permanent establishment in Manitoba and have assets of less than \$25 million, and then it must also be registered by Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation as producing an eligible film.

* (1600)

Ms. McGifford: I am actually not thoroughly familiar with the document from which the minister is reading. I heard most of the information that she supplied before, but I would really appreciate a copy of that document.

Mrs. Vodrey: That information is well known. I am very happy to provide that information to the member. If she requires anything that may be somewhat more technical than that in terms of its application, then it might be most helpful if she spoke with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

I would just like to take a moment because Marble Island Pictures, which has been working in Manitoba, has just sent a letter. I think that it would be very important, since we are talking about the film and sound industry and how very positive and vibrant it is in our province, to just read a little bit of this letter into the record which says to us: my company and our industry as whole—[interjection]

Point of Order

Ms. McGifford: Point of order, Mr. Chair, I understand if the minister is reading from a letter, then she is required to table three copies of the letter, and I would like to have a copy.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am going to defer to your ruling on that, because this is some information which was given to me. I am more than happy to read parts of it into the

record, but I would ask that the Chair perhaps provide a ruling.

Mr. Chairperson: Rule 34: “Where in a debate a Member quotes from a private letter, any other Member may require the Member who quoted from the letter to table the letter from which the Member quoted but this rule does not alter any rule or practice of the House relating to the tabling of documents other than private letters.” Is it a private letter?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, since this letter was not directed to me specifically, I think that I should not table it.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: However, the member does not want to hear good news. You know, this is the position that we are in with this member all the time. You know, she does not want to hear about the good work done in terms of a ministerial trip abroad promoting our province; she does not want to hear about the good news which can be made available to her about our film and sound industry. We just consistently have the member not wanting to speak up for the arts, not wanting to hear the important cultural developments in our province, and it is most disappointing to myself and to the arts community as a whole.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask the minister whether she is aware if there is a policy decision that has been made by the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Recording Corporation as to what percentage of the money goes to film and video and what goes to sound. I realize that film is very capital intensive, but we are all aware that Manitoba has a very important recording and music industry. I am curious as to the distribution of monies.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am happy to provide some of that information to the member and also to speak just a little bit more on the vibrant film industry that we have. In terms of film, the amount of money is, to film, \$1.2 million, and to sound, \$300,000.

As a result of this, there is a very vibrant industry. I will not be quoting, but I am very happy to talk a little bit about some of the comments that have come from

the Marble Island Pictures in which, when this smaller independent film company is asked why they do not move to another place, basically, their answer is simply Manitoba is definitely the place to be in independent film in Canada, and that there is a strong recognition of the importance of our film tax credit, of the extraordinary support that our government has shown to the industry. Make no mistake about that. Our government support shown to the industry through the tax credit and through the general support provided through the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and other related departments of government has really made Manitoba an extremely vibrant place to be.

The recruitment that has been done by people such as Carole Vivier to bring film production here to Manitoba has just been wonderful. It is also one of those areas that I would say to the member, when she has taken a very narrow view, I believe, of arts and culture and heritage, that this does not know borders and that Manitoba's name has been promoted in many, many places around the world and we have become known as an excellent centre. We have documentation that has come into various ministers and people in government where people are prepared to put their name to their support of the film and sound industry in Manitoba. This is good news, Mr. Chair.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am sure the minister is aware that my position is the critic for Culture and Heritage. My job is to ask questions and to try and find out what is going on. I am really surprised at the minister interpreting my doing my job as an attack and as representing a narrow view of the arts. I think it is quite unfair.

I also want to say that I am really shocked at the minister's tone for a person who earlier today chided me for sarcasm. I would like to return tit for tat and suggest that the minister's rant and hectoring is really uncalled for. I would advise her that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I am actually very disappointed in the way the minister has yelled at me.

But if I could continue with some questions—

* (1610)

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, just to clarify for the record for anybody reading this in the future, there was not a tone of yelling. The member is obviously extremely sensitive about the way she is perceived and the way her questioning has been perceived. Her questioning, through the process of Question Period and so on, has simply been to be extremely small-minded about arts and culture in Manitoba.

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

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Last year, we spoke about the Manitoba art collection and the purchasing of art, and I believe the minister told me that there were approximately 3,000 items in the Manitoba art bank. The minister last year talked of an Internet catalogue, and I would like to ask the minister if there is a hard copy catalogue.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, there is not.

Ms. McGifford: Has there ever been a hard copy catalogue?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do not have a hard copy catalogue, and to our knowledge there has not ever been a hard copy catalogue.

Ms. McGifford: Who owns this collection?

Mrs. Vodrey: The people of Manitoba.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the minister if the works in the collection are regularly appraised, soundly insured and properly preserved.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is yes, Mr. Chair.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could give me some information, then, for example, how regularly are the works appraised, and, in fact, what the appraised value of the collection might be, some details

about insurance and about the ways in which the works are conserved and preserved.

Mrs. Vodrey: The condition of the collection is assessed every year to make sure that they are preserved. There are condition reports done each year of the whole inventory. My understanding is that as a result of the last appraisal, the appraisal is somewhere in the area of \$3 million, and that now there is the process of a new appraisal being done with the provincial art collection.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me with whom these works are insured and what the cost of insurance is.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the government is self-insured, and these are part of the government's assets.

Ms. McGifford: I am not quite sure what self-insured means. I wonder if somebody could explain it to me, please.

Mrs. Vodrey: This question may be best answered through Finance or through Government Services who deal with the insurance process of all of government's assets on a regular basis.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me what the point is in having it in the Internet catalogue, but not having a hard copy catalogue. I realize that one of the difficulties with a hard copy catalogue is that the collection is being augmented year by year, but presumably it could be updated.

The reason I make this point, Mr. Chair, is that I do not know what the percentage of Manitobans is that has access to the Internet and to that catalogue. I know that some of us more fortunate Manitobans do, but since it is owned by the people of Manitoba, it would be, I think, a good idea to have the collection, via a catalogue, available to many more Manitobans.

Mrs. Vodrey: I think it is probably best to clarify that we have been talking about a catalogue because it is a listing, but there is not a catalogue as the member might think formerly of as a catalogue. There is a listing of the collection. It is on Intranet, within government, so we have a listing of the art and where it is. The art

itself is all available to the public, all accessible to the public. It is hung in public buildings, and so at this point there has not been a catalogue or a form of catalogue developed.

Ms. McGifford: Have the individual pieces of art been photographed? My understanding is for insurance it is necessary to photograph art.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is, yes, that it is all photographed.

Ms. McGifford: So it would be possible, though expensive, to create a pictorial catalogue?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Ms. McGifford: To move on, during last year's Estimates we discussed a cultural industries forum which was cancelled for June 2—it would be June 2, 1997, I guess—for some obvious reasons, because I am assuming that it was because it was election day. I understand that this was to be rescheduled, and I wonder if this forum did take place. I wonder what the results of the forum might be. Were there any reports or documents that I might have?

Mrs. Vodrey: There have been two forums, so I think it is probably useful to speak about both. I think the member is referring to the export forum, not the cultural industries forum which was due to be held in June of last year. It was a one-day event. It was, in fact, rescheduled and held in June. It provided delegates from the cultural sector with quite comprehensive information and orientation about export marketing and resources. There was not a document produced at that time.

Then, Mr. Chair, there was a cultural industries forum which took place in December of this year. It was sponsored by the Economic Innovation and Technology Council, the EITC, and it was responsible for laying a foundation for a comprehensive development plan for cultural industries including film, sound, publishing, new media. I understand that from that there has been a document produced which is a public document.

* (1620)

Ms. McGifford: I have a document here produced by the Manitoba Cultural Coalition in which they talk about a cultural exports consortium and list several organizations that have participated in this. I wonder if this is the same consortium that the minister talked about earlier as having met in I believe she said June.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, my understanding is that it is not the same document, but that many groups who participated may, in fact, have produced some documentation themselves following.

Ms. McGifford: From that same document there is a section on a cultural training council. I know that cultural training is extremely important, especially with our burgeoning film industry. The contact listed in this document is Mr. Terry Welsh of the provincial Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

I read that the provincial government is at a preliminary stage in supporting the setup of this sort of council with the possible establishment by spring—that would be presumably at this time—and perhaps some training projects by next summer.

Since we are all aware of the importance of training in the cultural sectors, I wonder if the minister could provide me with any information on this council, its progress, and the kind of training, cultural training that is taking place in Manitoba.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, to my knowledge there is not a council, but there is a Strategic Planning Committee. It is made up of cultural groups, it is made up of interest within government, and that is how it is operating at the moment.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, actually the word “council” was from the vocabulary or from the title of the Manitoba Cultural Coalition. I wonder, then, if the minister could speak about provincial involvement in training people for the cultural sector and give us some details as to the kind of training program that is available, where it is available, what are the gaps, what is going on in preparing Manitobans to work in cultural industries.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, that is the purpose of the Strategic Planning Committee in that they are

making this review, they are looking to identify the needs, they are looking to identify any gaps and to identify, in fact, where this training should be going and should be focused.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I wonder, then, if the minister could tell me of the Strategic Planning Committee's work. Have they identified any of the objectives? Where are we in this in preparing people to work in the cultural industries?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, what I understand at the moment is that they have just hired the consultant, that the terms of reference have just been developed with the consultant, and that there is now developing a plan of consultation. So, at the moment, that is the information that we have. There is no doubt that this is an important area. It is important to continue to attract for the industry, and so we will be very supportive, in any way possible, of this Strategic Planning Committee.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister or her staff know if we are able to provide film crews for all the productions, et cetera, that are taking place in Manitoba from Manitoba, or are we importing individuals from other areas in Canada and perhaps the U.S. in order to do the work that is currently taking place in the province?

Mrs. Vodrey: We have in Manitoba at the moment two full-time crews, and I understand that we are training crews as quickly as we possibly can. At the moment we do still need to have some people come into Manitoba to assist where required because the industry is so vibrant. It is also somewhat of a mobile workforce as well, and so it may not be unusual to have people come into Manitoba to assist where we require even additional support.

Ms. McGifford: The minister has precisely made the point in why I was asking questions about training. I wonder if the minister works with the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) on any of the issues.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is yes.

Ms. McGifford: I have no more questions on the Arts Branch.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (e) Arts Branch (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$542,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$120,400; (3) Grant Assistance \$4,010,300—pass.

Item 14.2.(f) Public Library Services.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask the minister what her position on membership fees for Winnipeg public libraries is.

Mrs. Vodrey: Could I just ask the member to repeat the question, please.

* (1630)

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the minister what her position on membership fees for Winnipeg public libraries is. That is to say: does the minister believe or does her government believe that membership fees should be charged for accessing materials from the Winnipeg Public Library?

Mrs. Vodrey: Our government has not supported a membership fee for public libraries, and that continues to be our position.

Ms. McGifford: In other words, the minister is saying that her government would not support an amendment to The City of Winnipeg Act which would allow for membership fees for Winnipeg public libraries.

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct, we would not support an amendment for membership fees.

Ms. McGifford: Last year we talked about the report, Quality and Access: The Future of Public Libraries in Manitoba. The first recommendation in that report is to strengthen and update the Manitoba Public Libraries Act, and I would like to ask the minister today whether progress has been made in regard to updating the Winnipeg Public Libraries Act.

Mrs. Vodrey: At the moment there are not any plans to amend The Public Libraries Act. I have met with the MAPLIN committee, and I believe I have also had this discussion with that committee. I have been, however, encouraging continued province-wide resource-sharing

of library resources, and I believe that this can be accommodated through the existing regulations.

Ms. McGifford: Last year, I believe the minister agreed that this Public Libraries Act was dated and in need of amendment.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I think I am quoting directly from the minister when she said: "I will undertake to determine how I might be able to do that in the next while." So the minister is telling me today that nothing has been done.

Mrs. Vodrey: It is not that nothing has been done. It is that I have now a much greater familiarity. In our early discussions, it was certainly a possibility, and I was making appointments to the MAPLIN board at that time. I have now had the opportunity to meet with them. I have now had an opportunity to work with libraries. I have also communicated this, as I recall, to the MAPLIN board and have tried to set out with them some initiatives, again the resource-sharing being one. I had, in my last meeting with them, spent a significant amount of time—I beg your pardon. The Public Library Board, sorry. I beg your pardon, just for correction in terms of Hansard and also the member.

But as I have met with the Public Library Advisory Board, I have, in fact, listened to each of the members in terms of their issues, in terms of how they see the future, and have been trying very carefully to work with each of the members. Where they had an opinion of what they would like to be done, I have agreed to try to provide further consideration. So I would not say in any way that nothing has been done, but a decision has been taken at this time.

Ms. McGifford: I meant in my remark that nothing had been done on the first recommendation, which was to strengthen and update the Manitoba Public Libraries Act. I am then understanding the minister to say that she and the current Public Library Advisory Board do not agree with the report that suggested that this act was in need of updating and amendment.

Mrs. Vodrey: I think the member is trying to provide perhaps too much of a précis on the issue. I can tell the member that I have had a discussion with the Public

Library Advisory Board. There would be perhaps some interest in having resource-sharing legislated, and my position is that at the moment I believe that the resource-sharing can be accommodated through the existing regulations and that the co-operative approach is certainly a reasonable approach to look at how we can make this happen. Where there are ways that I can assist in making that happen, then I am quite interested in doing that.

So, Mr. Chair, at the moment there are not plans to amend The Public Libraries Act. However, I would not want that to be perceived as any lack of interest on my part or of our government's in terms of the library issues and initiatives. I have taken part in a number of conferences. I have made an effort to meet, again, with the Public Library Advisory Board and with libraries across the province or through my own department.

I am very interested in it, but it does not, at the moment, require an update or a change, amendments to the act.

Ms. McGifford: I certainly was not speaking in favour of nonco-operation. My point is simply that a committee struck by this government recommended review and amendments to the Manitoba Public Libraries Act. The work has not been done.

I am asking the minister—and she does not have to answer, of course, and probably is choosing not to—whether she disagrees with the committee that her own government struck and the recommendations of the committee which were contained in a report commissioned by her own government. So that was my question.

I wanted to ask the minister whether the Public Library Board appointments now comply with The Public Libraries Act.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, they do. As of last year, the Senate appointment had been made, and the current chair has been chosen by the board, and yes, they are in compliance.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister could tell me if there is any stipulation as to the number of times this board meets or should meet, I suppose.

Secondly, are the minutes of their meetings available to the public?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, to my knowledge, there is not a requirement of the number of meetings. I understand that they generally meet approximately six times a year, and I am informed that they have met at least three times since September now.

* (1640)

Ms. McGifford: The second part of that question is: are the minutes of these meetings available to the public?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand and I am informed that they do not take minutes, that they participate on a discussion basis because they are advisory.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, last year the minister told me that there was a funding formula with regard to library grants to the City of Winnipeg, and that I believe she said it was 11 percent of the operating budget to a maximum of approximately \$1.9 million. I wonder if that formula prevails for this year.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, it does.

Ms. McGifford: Has that formula ever been reviewed or is there a process for review of it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, there is not a formal mechanism for review. I understand that until this year they have always been below the maximum. This is the first year that they have, in fact, reached the maximum.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me, please, will the City of Winnipeg then receive this \$1.9 million this year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we expect that in this coming fiscal year they will, and we do have that money available for them.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could compare the grant to the City of Winnipeg to the grants

made in similar jurisdictions across the city on a per capita basis. That is to say, does the government grant to Winnipeg on a per capita basis compare favourably with the government grants on a per capita basis to other major cities in Canada?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I do have some figures for this. For large libraries in 19 Canadian cities with populations over 175,000, provincial funding per capita for Winnipeg public libraries ranks fourth out of 19, and provincial funding at 11 percent of the budget places Winnipeg public libraries third out of 19.

Ms. McGifford: According to a chart I have, in 1996 the provincial government on a per capita basis funded Winnipeg public libraries at the rate of \$2.96 per Winnipegger, I would assume, and the rural and northern rates were \$7.93 per individual. I am not quarrelling with these figures or suggesting that there is anything wrong, but there is quite a difference. I wonder if there is a social policy objective behind this and if the minister could explain that to me.

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand the reasoning, and I understand that it has taken place over a number of years. The rural grants are matched up to \$7.50 per capita, and this has been to encourage development in the rural library system.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me if the grant that the Manitoba government makes to the City of Winnipeg has any provisos? If so, what are they, or is it just, here you are, here is the cash?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, there are not any conditions regarding the funding. We do encourage them to share, but that is not a condition of the grant, sharing resources.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to clear up something with the minister. Does the minister mean share resources throughout the province, within the city? I wonder if she could elaborate on her statement.

Mrs. Vodrey: I mean that to be a sharing throughout the province through other library systems. I am looking at encouraging and sharing of resources in general.

Ms. McGifford: I have no more questions on the Public Library Services.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (f) Public Library Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$757,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$677,900—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$4,311,200—pass.

Item 14.2.(g) Historic Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, last year I think I asked the minister for a list of members of the Manitoba Heritage Council, and I do not believe I have received that list. So I would like to ask again for that list. It is just a small housekeeping matter.

Recently, I read a report of the Manitoba heritage resource impact assessment program which I found, by the way, very interesting, in fact, fascinating. Within that document, there was a summary of the results of heritage resources, impact assessments, during the 1994-95 fiscal year.

I want to ask some questions. First of all, is there a report of the results of the heritage resources impact assessment program's work for each fiscal year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, in our annual report on page 20, it is noted that there were 23 on-site assessments last year.

Ms. McGifford: Does the heritage resource impact assessment program publish a separate report, or is it merely part of the annual report, because I did somehow—I do not know how I accessed it, this 1994-95 book which was put out by this program.

* (1650)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, all I can say is that, to our knowledge, it is not a separate report, so I would be interested in seeing what the member has, and that the information is contained within our annual report.

Ms. McGifford: I will look up the document and make a copy for the minister when I find it, which might be quite difficult going through my file system.

I wondered if the minister could tell me what the budget for this program is, and is it within Historic Resources?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is part of the operating budget of Historic Resources.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister then indicate to me which line this budget is included in and what the amount of the budget is?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, it would be 14.2.(g)(1) and (2).

Ms. McGifford: And the amount of the budget?

Mrs. Vodrey: We would have to get for the member anything expended specifically on this because it is simply a part of the operating budget which is listed here.

Ms. McGifford: I would appreciate any further information in that regard. I wonder if the minister could tell me generally who initiates a request for an impact assessment. Is it a representation from a cultural group, from individuals? What is the process?

Mrs. Vodrey: The request can come from our municipal advisory committees, they can come from individuals, they can come as a result of our own assessment. We are aware when development is being done, if there may be an interest in a certain area, and also we have trained people in the logging industry so that when the logging industry is operating that they are at least alert to some of these issues.

Ms. McGifford: How is the decision made whether to go ahead with an impact assessment? Is it determined by whether or not a request meets certain screening criteria?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that there is a visual site inspection, and then with that visual site inspection it is also referenced with a great deal of survey information which we have at the moment. Then all of that information is put together and a decision is made.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister is aware of the concerns of Ruth Swan in regard to the Pembina

Metis cemetery and whether her department has been involved in this issue.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am certainly aware of communication from Ruth Swan, and my department has been working with Ruth Swan. The area she is interested in, however, is in North Dakota, and because of that it is within the jurisdiction of the North Dakota government, but whatever assistance we have been able to provide her with we have.

Ms. McGifford: Has the minister written to the governor of North Dakota or any other North Dakota authorities about Ruth Swan's issue?

Mrs. Vodrey: Those letters have come from the staff level, and it is our understanding, my understanding, that letters have gone from the staff level.

Ms. McGifford: Has a reply been received, or is the whole issue still in transition?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the staff have been in touch with staff in North Dakota, and they attempt to let Ruth Swan know any progress that has occurred.

Ms. McGifford: I noticed the minister said, there is an attempt to let her know. Have you not been able to locate her?

Mrs. Vodrey: Sorry, Mr. Chair. The member may have misunderstood me. There has been communication with her, and there does not seem to be any difficulty in finding her.

Ms. McGifford: So the issue appears to have been resolved, but not in the way that Ruth Swan wanted it to be resolved. Is that accurate?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct, Mr. Chair, because it is not within our jurisdiction.

Ms. McGifford: So the minister feels there is nothing more that she, her department, or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) can do to protect these graves, this cemetery?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, Mr. Chair, it does not appear at the moment anyway that there is more, but we certainly are willing to work with Ruth Swan.

We have tried to provide her with whatever support she needs, with whatever background that we can do, but jurisdictionally, when it is not within the jurisdiction of the province of Manitoba, then we have to rely on the goodwill of the other jurisdiction involved, that being North Dakota.

Ms. McGifford: I had heard that Historic Resources was no longer publishing the series of books. I am holding a copy here. I am sure that people are all familiar with this series. Is it true that they are no longer being produced?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand some are out of print and some are being translated, and there appears to be some turnover. The one the member held up in particular I am not sure of.

Ms. McGifford: I was just citing this as an example. So then there is no plan to disband the production of this material?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, there is no plan to disband that, Mr. Chair.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am finished with Historic Resources.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (g) Historic Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,161,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$335,300—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$869,300—pass.

Item 14.2.(h) Recreation and Wellness Promotion (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$497,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$217,400—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$654,900—pass.

Item 14.2.(j) Regional Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$882,800—pass; (2) Other expenditures \$299,100—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$35,100—pass.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$31,120,600 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

The time being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

SENIORS DIRECTORATE

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of Seniors Directorate. Does the honourable minister responsible have an opening statement?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Chairperson, as Minister responsible for Seniors, I am pleased to present the 1998-99 budget Estimates for the Seniors Directorate.

Seniors aged 65 and over are forming a growing share of Canada's population. Future population projections based on information on births, deaths, and migration tell us that by the year 2016 seniors will comprise an unprecedented 16.7 percent of the Manitoba population. Currently, the 85-and-over age group is the fastest growing segment of Canada's older population. Between the years 2011 and 2021, the fastest growing segment of the older population, with most baby boomers retiring or retired, is expected to be the 65 to 74 age group.

In Manitoba, according to the 1996 census, there are 156,258 seniors representing 13.6 percent of the Manitoba population. Manitoba ranked second among the provinces and territories in percentage of the total population who are seniors. As a group, they make an immeasurable contribution to our province.

Mr. Chairperson, a large portion of today's seniors are well educated, healthy, and have greater disposable income than ever before. Consequently, seniors' lifestyles and expectations are changing. The role of the Minister responsible for Seniors continues to be a very important and challenging one. Our government is committed to preserving and enhancing the quality of life for older Manitobans.

* (1430)

The Seniors Directorate continues its work to ensure that seniors' needs and concerns are addressed in the

development of government policies and programs. They continue to work closely with government, nongovernment and community-based agencies which impact on the lives of seniors.

Through consistency and hard work, the directorate has maintained its close working relationship with seniors' groups throughout Manitoba, allowing the directorate to continue its ongoing dialogue with seniors.

The following are some of the highlights of 1997: In my discussions with seniors and representatives of seniors' organizations, I am keenly aware of the public concern for individual safety and security of older persons. I consider this to be a very important issue and, in response, have worked closely with my colleagues in the Department of Justice and other sectors of my government in seeking a co-ordinated approach to services for older victims of crime.

Last year, I spoke to you of a much-needed legal handbook on safety and security for seniors. It was released in 1997 to overwhelming demand. To date, almost 16,000 copies have been distributed to Manitoba seniors, their families and the caregivers.

In March of 1998, I again attended the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for Seniors across Canada. Ministers meet to plan collaborative approaches across jurisdictions and sectors to address challenges associated with the demographics of an aging society.

In 1997-98, we affirmed our joint commitment to include seniors' perspectives and needs in all relevant legislation, policy and program initiatives, and to continue to work co-operatively to this end. Ministers across Canada addressed the key issues of importance to seniors today—safety and security; palliative and continuing care; as well as supportive housing for older persons.

Highlights included the approval of the development of a national database of federal, provincial and territorial policies and programs for seniors, for use with the National Framework on Aging. It will contain information on health, social housing and income support programs and other services.

In 1997, a set of principles and policy questions were developed in collaboration with seniors across the country. The five principles are based on what seniors express as their consistent values and aspirations for a high quality of life—security, independence, dignity, participation and fairness. These principles enable the application of “a seniors' lens” to government initiatives at all levels.

The principle and the policy questions will make up a guide entitled Principles of the National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide, which also received ministers' endorsement.

This is a project spanning three years that will provide government departments with a unique tool to enhance their ability to meet the needs and the priorities of our older citizens.

The Seniors Directorate continued to be the central point of contact for seniors and their organizations.

The seniors information line was again well used by seniors and their families, providing them with information, assistance and referral. The types of calls received reflect the issues and the concerns of seniors throughout Manitoba. In 1997-98, there were over 4,400 calls received on the seniors information line. This represents a continued increase in the number of calls requesting information assistance. This does not include the additional calls made by the directorate on behalf of callers to various departments and services.

The computerized housing directory continues to be a popular resource for seniors looking for a place to live. The directory lists rental units, condominiums, townhouses, mobile homes and residences for persons 55 and over around the province. The list includes housing available for rent, purchase or life lease. The directorate reviews and updates this list on an ongoing basis.

Directorate staff supported the Manitoba Council on Aging in undertaking its function as an advisory body to the Minister responsible for Seniors. The insight and the recommendations from the council have been an invaluable resource in providing a direct link between older Manitobans and government. The directorate continues to play a leading role in the area on abuse of

the elderly. With the concept that service delivery reflects our values, the directorate provided abuse training workshops in 1997 for professionals in law enforcement areas. Elder abuse is a multifaceted problem that must be acknowledged and addressed.

Also, in the area of increasing sensitivity towards seniors and their concerns, I am very proud to inform you of the successful launch of Through Other Eyes, a training workshop targeted at business and agencies providing services accessed by seniors. The two-hour workshops help businesses and organizations see their establishments through the eyes of seniors. The aim is to remove physical and psychological barriers that may discourage seniors from using their services, products and facilities.

Staff delivered workshops to retail, banking and government sectors throughout 1997. In June 1997, during Seniors Month, special celebrations were held in the Westman and Eastman regions as well as in Winnipeg in the North Kildonan area. Each year the directorate works with host seniors' groups to plan these events.

My column in Seniors Today continues to receive a very positive response. Seniors have told us that the information is useful and helpful. The Manitoba Society of Seniors also requested a monthly submission from me for the Manitoba Society of Seniors Journal. I began contributing to each issue of the journal in June. In addition, the directorate published the biannual seniors newsletter, the Seniors Source, first introduced in December of 1994. This newsletter has assisted us in keeping seniors informed by providing them with updates on government programs and the services that could benefit them. Our next edition will be ready for distribution to seniors and seniors' organizations in the early summer of this year.

As you can see, 1997 was a very full year, and 1998-99 will continue with a busy schedule. The initiatives that we have planned in 1998-99 include safety and security, as it continues to be a priority for my government. During 1998-99, I will continue to work closely with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and his staff to further the rights and enhance the services for victims of crime. My staff will continue working with

seniors and various agencies linked to ensure seniors are well informed about how to avoid undue risks.

My staff participate on a provincial government committee on crime and on a network of interagency representatives on safety and security. As well, staff is working with community-based organizations and the police on possible initiatives to promote safety and security at the federal-provincial-territorial level. I am working with my colleagues in other jurisdictions to establish a working group to identify concrete options to ensure safety and security of seniors. This includes consultations with the National Advisory Council on Aging and our Council on Aging in Manitoba.

In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The United Nations theme for this year is Canada: A Society for All Ages. It is anticipated that it will foster a worldwide awareness of the importance of seniors' role in society and the importance of intergenerational harmony, respect and support. I believe it will also affect the way that we as Manitobans view the aging process and the values we place on respect and understanding for all, regardless of age.

* (1440)

Our government will be promoting active participation of public, private and not-for-profit organizations in a range of projects and initiatives. It is our hope that, by working in partnership with groups throughout Manitoba, we will address some issues that are important to our province and benefit seniors now and in the future. Projects will involve not only seniors and agencies closely tied with seniors but people of all ages including projects with youth and school-aged children. It will provide Manitobans with the opportunity to enhance communication between citizens of all ages and build bridges of understanding between the generations.

Manitoba's Seniors Directorate will act as a central contact prior to and during The International Year of Older Persons 1999. It will publicize events across Manitoba and share ideas and provide assistance wherever possible. The year will officially be announced on October 1, 1998, The International Day

of the Older Persons. As part of its educational mandate, the Seniors Directorate will continue to offer Through Other Eyes to raise awareness on the special needs of aging adults and people with disabilities. Responses from business and service providers has been encouraging. Those who have used the training within their organizations report it enabled them to make positive changes which benefited their older customers.

The directorate continues to respond to requests for educational print materials on topics most frequently requested by older persons such as legal, health care and safety. A new updated edition of the Senior Citizens Handbook, the seventh edition, will be issued early in 1998 by the Council on Aging. I believe that handbook has already been distributed and is available.

The Manitoba Council on Aging awarded the first recognition awards in 1997 to honour individuals, organizations or businesses whose exceptional acts benefited seniors or whose valuable services reflected a positive attitude towards older persons. The council is again hosting this prestigious award. The deadline for submitting nominations was April 15, 1998. Awards will be presented at a recognition ceremony to be held in the Legislative Building in June of this year, 1998.

As Minister responsible for Seniors, I will continue to actively participate at federal/provincial/territorial meetings of Ministers for Seniors across Canada. I will continue my commitment and my support for development of the national framework on aging, and I will also continue to collaborate with other jurisdictions on common issues such as the enhancement of safety and security for seniors, sharing models of service delivery to maximize quality care to older persons. I remain committed to increasing awareness of the choices pertaining to palliative care and sharing best practices in the provision of supportive housing. I will also ensure Manitoba has representation on the Canada co-ordinating committee to stimulate and co-ordinate activities for the International Year of the Older Persons, 1999.

I shall continue to strive to be in step with the aspirations and priorities of seniors in all undertakings of this government. To this end, a two-way

communication system for the sharing of ideas, visions and plans is crucial.

In closing, I believe the Seniors Directorate and the Manitoba Council on Aging is continuing to fulfill an invaluable role within government by ensuring that we are meeting the needs of Manitoba seniors to the maximum extent possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to thank the honourable minister for his opening comments. Would the critic for the official opposition party have an opening statement?

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Chairperson, the honourable minister mentioned issues high in priority as far as seniors are concerned. He mentioned individual safety and health care and housing and income support and observed particularly that there is an enhanced wellness among seniors who are now living longer today in a healthier lifestyle than before and who had secured for themselves some kind of secure base for their income support during late in life, particularly for those retirees who had pensions and other help in old age.

There are of course many issues that concern seniors in this province which the minister observed is about 13.6 percent of the population. There are other issues: the erosion, for example, of fixed income of those seniors who are not so lucky to have saved enough, and the loss of the age tax credit and the pension income clawbacks by the federal government.

In matters of health care services, they are also very worried about the loss and deterioration of medicare, of home care needs and high costs of personal care homes. In matters of personal safety and security, there is patent inadequacy in our justice system. We have heard about invasions of homes of seniors in our very own city, and there are also increasing costs in other items of ordinary life, like the increasing telephone rates in this province. There are municipal property tax increases for those seniors who are still able to manage to continue owning and maintaining their homes, and some seniors who are not so lucky are worried about daycare for older adults and for children and the adequacy of Pharmacare insurance coverage for some of them who are poor seniors.

There are some conflicts sometimes with seniors and their own kin, intergenerational social conflicts. They are sometimes exposed to frauds, not only by strangers, but also by abuse by their own relatives and children, especially financial abuse. Of course, the seniors themselves sometimes find themselves in a drug-and-alcohol misuse situation. They are concerned about transportation, how to move around, and generally about poverty

Let me focus on what the minister has said: enhanced wellness and sense of security of income for certain lucky and favoured seniors who happen to have lots of resources.

In our general sense, I like to focus on the price they pay sometimes in trying to accumulate all this wealth and all these assets that they give up moments precious in life of every person, so I would like to focus on their neglect of what I consider as an important part of life, namely, leisure for people.

What is leisure? Why do we need leisure time even in our work here, whether we are bordering on that category called seniors or not? What makes leisure pleasurable for us? Why do we have sometimes to attend social functions and other events in our life? When you are in the twilight of life in late adulthood or old age, why is leisure so useful for the quality of life, for a quality of existence that we enjoy?

In his book, *Leisure in Your Life*, Geoffrey Godbey defined leisure as living in relative freedom from external physical and cultural constraints so as to be able to act by internal love in ways both personally pleasing and intuitively worthwhile. There are, at least, therefore, four aspects of leisure in our life, namely: the aspect of time, activity, attitude, and our own being.

Free time is a precondition to leisure. It may either be a voluntary free time, such as the time when a person voluntarily retires from employment or occupation, or it may be an involuntarily achieved free time if you are laid off work and become unemployed.

* (1450)

Activity without necessity is another aspect of our leisure in our life. Time is related to activity, and any

activity you do necessarily takes time. However, using free time to experience unknown events is not leisure, it is simply wanderlust, such as going out and exploring the rest of the world in a trip or something like that. Attitude is an aspect of leisure in one's belief that what one is doing is instinctively joyful so that one can let go of the self in the faith that the event will unfold as they should unfold all to the good.

Finally, our being, the end of our becoming, after a relatively free choice of a specific activity in life, is our own individual self-fulfilment. Leisure is a state of being, it is not mere recreation. Recreation is an idea that can be distinguished from leisure in our life, because recreation is simply a temporary, pleasurable activity such as a respite from work activity in order to refresh us, taking a holiday for a week and then coming back to work. That is temporary.

Why do we need leisure and why do we have leisure in society today? We know that our society prospered materially in terms of increased amount of goods and services produced by the economy. It does not necessarily follow that because we have more goods and services we necessarily have more and more leisure. It is a leisure that is enhanced if we take the proper opportunity by increasing productivity and by using more labour saving devices in our productive processes and by increasing our level of education and awareness, less physical fatigue in our jobs by means of appropriate work policy and of course by increasing discretionary or disposable income but, at the same time, we know that leisure is diminished by our insatiable greed for more and more. It is also accelerated in the rate of societal change taking place around us. We sometimes have to adjust and we have to give up our time for leisure.

Some people have to hold multiple jobs just to keep alive and take away from the time and therefore cannot enjoy any leisure time. Most of us oftentimes enjoy some kind of information overload that we cope with, that we are swamped by that information. We lack time for ourselves. Some people who are unlucky enough to be laid off of work become unemployed. They certainly have more free time if they are not working, but they lack the financial and educational resources in order to make meaningful use of involuntary time thrust upon them by being unemployed.

Even among those people who are educated, are able to do a specific task quickly and are able to do multiple tasks simultaneously, there are some people who can do two things at the same time. For example, some businessmen are driving their car and at the same time making deals on their cell phones. This is doing two things at the same time, and they are cutting idle time on their part.

Simple folks, however, in other areas of the world, in the nonindustrialized sector of the world, are able to combine their economic activities like fishing or harvesting with singing. While they are working they are harvesting and singing, they are group singing, they are laughing, they are enjoying. They have more leisure than us because they can find it even in the work situation. In the industrialized world we have to spend money to go to some other place like Florida or Jamaica in order to achieve some kind of leisure time.

What makes leisure pleasurable in life? A person's level of satisfaction in doing leisure activities is directly related to his own happiness as a person. If we ask a person for some reason why they engaged in their favourite activities, leisure activities, some of the answers we will get are the following: that they are doing it for the pleasure of doing it; that this is a welcome opportunity as a change of pace from their daily work routine; and that they have opportunity for contacts with their friends and relatives; and that leisure gives them kind of a new experience and makes life more interesting or they simply want to pass time and they enjoy doing so.

Engaging in leisure activity for the sheer pleasure of doing the activity means that there is some psychological appreciation and satisfaction by the mere passage of time in terms of personal perspective. This attitudinal perception of the sequence of events differs from person to person. A person who tends to race rapidly through all his activities through life also tends to do other things in a rather rushed, unleisurely way.

Leisure activities that a person does as a break period or a respite from the routine of work energizes him in order to be more refreshed when he comes back to work, and when leisure involves social contacts with friends and with acquaintances, including gossiping with friends, such experiences give a sense of freedom

to the individual and give some sense of enjoyment doing what he is doing because we as human beings by nature are social beings. We cannot for a long time exist by ourselves alone. We have to talk with someone, and people talk sometimes too much on the phone, for example, that they forget that the phone is needed for other more essential purposes.

Leisure activities that provide new experiences, such as participating in tours of historical places or engaging in new sporting activities are there because of the excitement that they generate in the individual.

Finally, a mere passing of time in itself may give pleasure because of the serenity and inner peace that the person enjoys by just carefree time passing. Watching little robins, for example, chirp in the tree in your own backyard is apparently an idle passing of time, but if it gives you pleasure, it gives you an appreciation of what goes on in nature and the cyclical rhythm of the natural world, then it gives you real pleasure.

In our busy workaday world of our increasingly acquisitive and materialistic society, we sometimes trade away great opportunities for leisure just to earn more money, thinking that we will be able to afford later on some more sophisticated form of leisure activities, like going to some expensive place, without appreciating the fact that even simple things like watching the sunset or the flowers will give us leisure without expenses. Ironically, there are people who have lots and lots of discretionary income, but they simply run out of time to do the leisure activities in their life and, therefore, they do not have any time anymore to enjoy the pleasurable aspects of their life.

If there is a popular way of spending our free time, particularly among older adults and senior citizens, my guess is that it is television watching. Approximately about 40 percent of the free time of adults in North America is spent watching television.

Whether we are watching spectator sports or news, we thought that TV viewing is relatively inexpensive. Once you have the TV set, there is no more expenditure except to pay, of course, the monthly charges if you have cable privileges. Yet the more time we watch TV, the less time we have for other health-preserving leisure

activities, like walking. Walking, itself, is a leisure activity. Even if you walk without any purposes, it rejuvenates your body, your physical body. You inhale more oxygen, and you enjoy the pleasure of walking, especially during pleasant times like we are having nowadays.

* (1500)

Now, in late adulthood—the human being passes through many stages of life, like childhood, adolescence, adulthood and, finally, old age. Of course, in our youth, in our childhood, we are so absorbed by voluntary activities, but there are also many rules that are set for our play activities. Play is not part of real life, but we do it because children also want to have some fun.

In the adolescence stage, being a transition from childhood to adulthood, there is an uncertainty as to whether or not the teenager should behave as a child or as an adult. Uncertainty is the result of these contradictory tendencies. It is the stage of life where we desire more autonomy for ourselves, but at the same time, there are social strictures. We should obey our parents, we should obey our school authorities, and so on. So there are these contradictory demands, more autonomy, at the same time more constraints. That is why adolescents sometimes become rebellious against established order in the home or in the community. Adolescence also is the time when our sexual desire is most powerful, but it is also the time when the opportunities are the fewest.

When we reach the stage of adulthood in life, society accords the freedom that we seek as individuals. We say, now that I am an adult, I have the right to do what I want to do at the time that I want to do it, for example, the personal freedom to drive a car for pleasure. We say, well, I am an adult, I can afford a car. I want to buy a car. I want to drive at my own leisure time.

It is in late adulthood, during post-parental years when the children have already left home, that there is some noticeable changes in the attitudes and perspectives of adults, either as husband or as wife.

While the husband's sexual vigour is diminished in old age—not for all individuals, but for most of us,

without any reference, this is general observation—with his head balding, with the stresses mounting as a result of children leaving the home, parents dying, the male crisis soon is overcome. The husband finds himself more and more dependent upon the wife, who becomes more and more managerial in the home and less and less sentimental.

Although the wife initially feels that she is neglected by children leaving home, she soon realizes that there is more freedom without children, and both husband and wife then gradually learn that in this post-parental stage of life, their economic resources are greater and their opportunities for leisure are better. They have many friends, and they realize they have many friends around them. Indeed, they may find physical and emotional well-being with friends, provided they are relatively healthy and they are free from serious illness of mind or of body. As human beings, our species evolved with changing values of society, changing environmental setting, that uniquely characterizes generations.

The older generation prefer leisure activities that cost very little. The middle generation often think that their leisure activities are their reward for their hard work in their life, while the young generation, who are becoming adult now, are able to spend more money on leisure, and they think that leisure is more meaningful to them the more money they spend.

In general, we all seek the full measure of life experiences, and, having more economic resources in old age, we could be happy in old age as we were happy in our youth. I think I would leave that subject because I do not want to indulge in that topic of leisure, but the only statement I want to make is that in our being engrossed with work activities and with responsibilities and with duties, and in our search for more and more resources and more and more assets, we should never, never neglect our own self, that we need some kind of leisure, pleasurable experience as adults, and we will not let the time pass without taking that opportunity for ourselves. All right? Now, let us ask important questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic of the official opposition party for his opening remarks. At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber.

We will be dealing with item 24.1. Seniors Directorate (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Santos: May I ask an agreement with the honourable minister that I ask all the questions, and then we approve everything all at once.

Mr. Reimer: That is fine with me.

Mr. Chairperson: That is agreed, then we will just ask questions on an open basis. Does the honourable minister want to introduce his staff present, please?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, I would like to introduce my staff, my Seniors Directorate Ms. Kathy Yurkowski, and my Seniors policy director Dorothy Hill.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister.

Mr. Santos: We have a book here called Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 1998-99 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, Manitoba Seniors Directorate. On page 2 there, it specifies in print the role and mission of the Seniors Directorate. In the second paragraph—I will be very detailed about asking all these little specifics because of too many generalities in books of this nature. We would like to make it operational and meaningful.

It says and it reads: “The overall responsibilities of the Minister responsible for Seniors and the Seniors Directorate include,” and then there is this enumeration, “representing the views of seniors and seniors' organizations to government.”

Let us analyze that statement. How does the Seniors Directorate satisfy itself that the directorate is really representing the views of seniors and of seniors' organizations to government? How does it know?

* (1510)

Mr. Reimer: It is something that I guess that we in the department take very seriously, and that is the overall consultations that we have with the various aspects of seniors, whether it is seniors' groups, seniors' organizations, and seniors' structures that we attend. When I say we, I mean not only myself but staff. My Seniors Directorate and my policy adviser will go to

meetings upon request and also meetings that have been called for the specific idea of gathering information, for the specific idea of getting information, getting close to the community so that there is an understanding of what is required to bring forth, whether it is legislation or concerns to government, as to what seniors are talking about.

We also have a Council on Aging association that meets regularly, and that is made up of representatives from all parts of Manitoba. They act as an advisory council to the minister and to the directorate, and they bring forth another perspective. We also try to move them throughout the province, actually, in meetings so that the meetings are not always in Winnipeg but in other areas of the province so that there is a perspective brought in of the rural component and rural areas.

So we try to rely on a lot of contact physically with the various seniors' associations. I try to get out to as many seniors' functions as I can on a personal basis, whether it is a social tea or an annual meeting or something that they are organizing. I like to go to them in their setting so that there is a comfort and a feeling of expression that they do not have the formality of coming to my office to express their views. So it is a process that we feel works very well, and any way that there is a way to make contact with seniors' groups, we will explore those areas.

Mr. Santos: The honourable minister mentioned the Manitoba Society of Seniors, but there are also other seniors' organizations. Can the honourable minister identify some of the other ones other than the Manitoba Society of Seniors?

Mr. Reimer: I only mentioned them as one, but the member is right, there are numerous seniors' groups. For example, there is a group in Brandon called Seniors for Seniors that I have met with. I have been to seniors' associations in Portage la Prairie, in Beausejour, in Binscarth, Russell, Thompson, the seniors' centres Creative Retirement. We have met with the resource councils, the friendly one in North Kildonan, what is that one called? Good Neighbours club.

Also, just recently I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting for the society for the French association of seniors. I have been involved and invited

to some of the, as the member knows, the Philippine association of seniors. So I try to get to as many as I can. I have been invited to various ethnic seniors' groupings.

We are blessed in Manitoba that we have very, very active seniors' groups that get together on a fairly frequent basis in a lot of places throughout not only Winnipeg but Manitoba. A lot of them are very active, membership is quite high, participation is quite high. So these have become very, very valuable resources for us as a sense of outreach to them and, also, more importantly, as a very positive function in communities, not only in the city but, like I say, in some of the rural small towns, seniors' organizations have been very active in some of the church basements and community halls in some of the small towns. They have vans, Handi-Transit vans, that will go out and pick up people, and they have become a real focus of activity almost on a daily basis where there is something happening in some of these senior centres. So I compliment them quite openly on their aggressiveness, for the volunteers and the tremendous resource that we have in the community.

The senior volunteers play a very, very important role in Manitoba's lifestyle, and they should be recognized and thanked as many times as we can.

Mr. Santos: Does the Seniors Directorate keep a computerized listing of all these organizational names of seniors, their locations, their phone numbers and other information?

Mr. Reimer: Yes.

Mr. Santos: I do not have such a list. Would the minister be gracious enough to provide me with such a list?

Mr. Reimer: We can make that available to the member.

Mr. Santos: The second point there in Role and Mission states: "providing a central source of information for the public on government programs and community-based services available to seniors." Now the first part of that mentions government programs. What are some of the specific government programs

that the Seniors Directorate could provide information about to seniors and seniors' organizations being the central source of information?

Mr. Reimer: Some of the things in regard to government programs that we get requests on from the public or from the seniors' groups, some of them have to do with housing components, housing questions. We get calls on pensions, and that is usually in relation to the federal pension, the CPP and general assistance pensions. We sometimes get calls on the taxes that seniors are involved with, to get some information; the 55 Plus program; we get some phone calls on regarding transportation. We get some calls on the SAFER program, which is the Shelter Allowance for Elderly Renters. We get calls on seniors' events. People will phone us and want to know where we have things happening.

One of the things we have just come out with is the new seniors' guide, and that has also got a listing of approximately—oh, I do not know how many entries are in there of various components that the people can go to find information on. It is available not only in English but in French, and that has become very, very popular, the Senior Citizens' Handbook. We have just had it printed, and already we have had very strong response from it, from the community in acceptance. So a lot of those things we make available to the seniors on an ongoing basis.

* (1520)

Mr. Santos: There are at least three levels of government in Canada: the federal, the provincial and the city or municipal level. Of course, correspondingly, there will be three different kinds of government programs: federal, provincial, civic or municipal. Where the program of government is one of federal government or of municipal level of government, is the directorate concerned about such other programs?

Mr. Reimer: I should point out to the member that a lot of times when we do get requests from seniors, they are wanting to, you know, get the answer in a sense, and we go the extra mile, if you want to call it, in trying to accommodate the requests for the seniors. If it is something that is not within our jurisdiction, as the member mentioned, it may be federal jurisdiction or

municipal jurisdiction, we do have an interrelationship with the other departments of the other two levels of government so that there is an update and a knowledge of what is happening, so that if the senior phones us we are able to redirect them or, in a lot of cases, we are able to give them the information because of our contact with the other departments to make sure that person is satisfied.

We try to accommodate the senior in a way that that senior does not have to continually shop through the system in trying to get the answer. We try to be a one-stop shopping area so that we can give him or her that information. So it means a lot of times co-ordinating with, as the member mentioned, the other two levels of government to find out what their programs are and how we can really utilize their resources too. So we try to make it as easy as possible, when the senior phones or makes an inquiry, to give him or her that information.

Mr. Santos: In other words, the Seniors Directorate is also acting as a referral unit to direct the inquirer to the proper person who has the information.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, that is right.

Mr. Santos: Would it not be more efficient in the course of the operation of the Seniors Directorate that all these frequently inquired programs of other levels of government be also kept in your database, the information, the sources and all those things, so that there will be no more referrals?

Mr. Reimer: The member is pointing in a direction that we have seen that there is a need to address these programs. This is one of the reasons that when we were at the national Seniors ministers meeting earlier this year that was one of the items that was up for discussion, and it created a fair amount of discussion, good discussion, from all the other ministers across Canada, this co-ordination of information into a central database type of thing so that we can all access it. That is one thing that we are working on, and we do see that it is a very positive initiative that we hope to have in place by the end of this year, possibly into the new year. Because the gathering of information and anytime there is a source of information that can be utilized from not only Manitoba but from, say, Nova

Scotia it can only be of a benefit for us to utilize. So that is one of the recommendations that came out of the Seniors ministers conferences that we had earlier this year.

I am quite optimistic that we should have that up and running and have it quite ready for utilization. It will save a lot of time in trying to outsource a lot of information, plus it also will eliminate the need to reinvent programs, if you want to call it, when we know that there is a program that is similar to something that we may want to initiate that has been run in Alberta or something, and we can just access the database and get the program that way. So the utilization of information is always very beneficial to our government.

Mr. Santos: Relating to the Seniors ministerial conference, how long had this conference been going on, as far as the minister knows?

Mr. Reimer: Since 1992, there have been four ministerial conferences. I have had the opportunity to be at two of them. The idea is to have them on a yearly basis, in a cyclical manner. I believe they are working on one already for next year for June or July. We are trying to do these on a yearly basis.

Mr. Santos: So this will become an annual Seniors ministers' conference?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, that is right.

Mr. Santos: Is there a permanent secretariat that keeps all the records of these conferences in some central location?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, the federal government, I guess, would be the central link between all the provinces in co-ordinating the meetings. They are usually the co-hosts of the ministerial meetings. The meeting last time, I believe, was in Prince Edward Island—[interjection] Oh, pardon me, in Victoria, British Columbia, and the federal government co-hosted that one. So the next time, if it is in, say, Newfoundland, then it will be co-hosted by the federal government and the minister for Newfoundland. The central host is the federal government, so they would be the ones that would keep the continuity of the meetings and the correspondence and that.

Mr. Santos: Aside from the federal government, which is also only one government, there are so many provincial governments that could possibly be hosting this conference.

Does it mean that the archives of the conference are scattered to the different hosts, depending on who hosted what conference?

Mr. Reimer: No. Every province would get a copy of the meetings and the minutes that would transpire. So we in Manitoba, though we may not host the meeting, would still be part of the minutes and the meetings, and we would have copies and access to all meetings.

So it is just that when I refer to the hosts, I mean, the federal government is part of every annual meeting. The provinces may be different, but the minutes go to each province whether they are the host or not.

An Honourable Member: En français, s'il vous plaît.

Mr. Reimer: Mais oui.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Chairperson, what I am asking really is whether the conference, of which there have been four already, as far as the minister recalls, whether they have developed a permanent bureaucracy, a secretariat of its own, distinguishable from the federal government.

* (1530)

Mr. Reimer: I do not know whether it can be classified as a permanent bureaucracy. I think what it is is that there is a group of my senior staff, like my Seniors Directorate here, that will meet two or three times a year with the various seniors directorates, if you want to call it, or senior personnel in the various governments from across Canada to co-ordinate meetings and items of commonality that they want to bring up at the annual meetings.

It is not a formal structure in a sense that it is a department, but it is part of my department that will intermingle with other parts of the other departments to come up with agendas and schedules and items that should be brought forth for the agenda. So they do meet two or three times, maybe, a year in formulating

the agenda for the meeting for the ministers, but it is not a formal, bureaucratic organization in that sense.

Mr. Santos: It does not need to be an extensive organization. All I am asking is whether the conference itself has its own executive director that will be the co-ordinating person who will contact all the other permanent officials of the various seniors directorates, whatever their name may be, in all the jurisdictions in order to set the time, place and conference and things like that, whether there is one office or one official doing all this co-ordinating function.

Mr. Reimer: I guess maybe the best way to try to answer the question is that there is a body or a central body, in a sense, made up of the officials that I referred to regarding my Seniors Directorate from our government and possibly other people in our department, but the co-ordination of it all is sometimes handled by the federal government by utilizing their resources in co-ordinating the meetings, but when the meetings are formulated sometimes they will be part of the discussions and they may not be. It depends on the topic that they are trying to pursue and some of the items that they feel should be brought up at the agenda so it sounds—I should not say it that way, but there is a certain informality of the structure.

It is still functional in that there is a common goal to try to get the various agenda items and agreement on the agenda items and working that way, so that when there is a meeting called it is not a big long clothesline list of items. Most of the items are down to maybe half a dozen items of discussion, and that is what we usually will concentrate on when we do get together.

So the committee itself or the members themselves will do a lot of the structural formatting, so that when we do get together we are not talking about everything. We are talking about the most important things that the various provinces have brought forth to talk about, so I think that that is maybe the best way to explain it.

Mr. Santos: So the federal government designates a federal official or personnel for a particular year to co-ordinate.

Who keeps the records? Where is it kept? And how is continuity preserved?

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, I am getting a lot of help here from around the table. Everybody is trying to help me.

Just like there is a Seniors staff here in Manitoba, federally there is also that office of a Seniors Directorate or a Seniors staffperson who is responsible for seniors. It is presently under the Health department, and that person is, you know, in that department. That person, he or she, would be the person who would be the contact through the federal government, so that there is a structure in the federal government similar to ours in recognition and a profile on seniors. So just as we have it here in Manitoba, the federal government has it on a national scene, and each province has some sort of component of a recognition of seniors within their government. It may not be in the Health department, particularly.

In some provinces they have it affiliated with other departments. In fact, I think, if I recall the last meeting, one of the ministers was also the Minister of Municipal Affairs and she was the Minister of Seniors also. So there is always, within each province, a component that is geared towards the seniors of that particular province. That office there would be the continuity of meetings and files and recordkeeping and the planning of directions, so that continuity would stay the same. The politicians may change, but the departments would stay.

Mr. Santos: This is in fact the genius of our system. There are two levels: the political segment, changing all the time; and the career personnel—

An Honourable Member: No, no. This is not changing all the time, Conrad. You have that wrong. We have been here for 10 years and another 10 years are coming.

Mr. Santos: Well, the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) knows that nobody knows the future, and therefore—

An Honourable Member: And he has been here for 60 years.

An Honourable Member: Well, I have been here for a while, Conrad, and I am not moving yet.

Mr. Santos: He should not be speaking with too much presumption.

Mr. Chairperson, given that the population of seniors in this province alone is, according to the minister, 13.6 percent of the population now and in 40 years time it will be probably double—the projection is at about 24 percent or something—one quarter of the population will be seniors. Would it not be better that there is a contribution from the federal government and a contribution from the various provincial governments establishing a permanent secretariat that is concerned solely with the concerns, interests and problems of senior citizens all across Canada? May the honourable minister take the leadership on that point when he attends the conference. Maybe he can take me along.

Mr. Reimer: The member never ceases to amaze me with his suggestions and his directions. They are worthy of consideration and I commend him for his insight.

Mr. Santos: The mere fact is that even the federal government, with all its vast resources, is still at that stage where Seniors is a puny little section of the mammoth Health department, whereas in Manitoba we have established a Seniors Directorate all its own. It used to be part of Health, but now we have evolved faster than the federal government. Maybe the honourable minister will show that kind of leadership when he attends the next conference. Would he be able to do that?

Mr. Reimer: I share that enthusiasm with the member. I think that seniors should have a more prominent display and position within the various levels of government in recognizing not only their portion of the population, but, more importantly, their contribution to this wellness and this great province and this great country that we live in. Profiling seniors is one thing that we feel very, very proud of here in Manitoba.

* (1540)

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

In fact, I am sure the member will ask me a few questions on it, but I will pre-empt him a bit on the tremendous excitement, I think, there is in the year

1999, where we will be celebrating the International Year of Older Persons here in Manitoba. I know that here in Manitoba there will be numerous events and functions and organizations that will come forth to showcase our wonderful contributions that seniors have put into this province. This is an excellent way to showcase seniors. Maybe, as the member has indicated, we should try to profile them even more on a national level, so there is this recognition that they are a very, very vital and a very, very important part and component of this wonderful way of life that we enjoy in this province and this country. So I have very little to argue with the member on his points.

Mr. Santos: Now that the minister has accepted this basic idea, maybe the year 1999 can be the initiation year for this kind of organization where all the records of all the seniors' activities all across the provinces are kept in one place, all the programs, all the benefits, all the duties and responsibilities kept by one executive director. Therefore, it will be easier to give information of whatever nature that is requested by senior citizens.

Mr. Reimer: I think that we are, in a way, headed that way with our direction in trying to compile information sources and data gathering on a national basis, and that certainly is one step in the right way to put more of a profile on the seniors and their importance. These are some of things that I think, as they develop and grow, if anything, once the awareness is there, the profile can be enhanced to some degree. This is something that maybe we should work upon.

Mr. Santos: Is the honourable minister amenable to the idea of initiating a project whereby all these provinces, even the richest ones like Ontario and Alberta and B.C., will be induced to contribute towards the development of this kind of structure?

Mr. Reimer: I think that we are in that direction. We are working on that way right now with a lot of the initiatives that we are undertaking at the present time. I look forward to the finalization of the model regarding the gathering of information, and that may be indeed a model to expand and to work forth.

It would possibly be a bit premature for me to speculate as to how far we can go with it, but I do know that, once there is a gathering of information and the

sharing of information, it will make it a lot easier for us to plot directions and to look at possible better solutions to working with the seniors. Indeed, this may prove to be a very, very beneficial first catalyst in bigger and better things, in getting more of a profile, as the member mentioned, for seniors or a seniors directorate. I think these are some of things that we can look optimistically at in saying that, with the information co-ordinating project that we are working on, and with the fact that we feel we will have this in place possibly or have it available by the end of the year, an evaluation should not take too much longer after that.

Mr. Santos: With this age of computerization of data and database building and the Internet and computer links, how difficult would it be to organize such a central source of information all across Canada?

Mr. Reimer: I think the member can look at what we are trying to do here in Manitoba within our own government in trying to centralize all our computer database under one envelope at the present time and the task it is taking. The member is right, with computerization and database and the Internet and all that stuff, the access to information has become instantaneous, but I think that what has to be co-ordinated a lot of times is the input and the direction of programming so that there is a compatibility of programs and the security of information and things like that that have to be acknowledged between the provinces. A lot of times one of the hardest things to get established is an understanding between provinces. The member is aware that sometimes it is easier to trade in the area of commerce between the United States or to the world than it is to trade with our neighbour right next to us, which is either Saskatchewan or Ontario.

But in the gathering of information, with the advent of change, these things, the barriers are coming down very, very fast. I would think that it should not be that long before there is a standardization of programming between all provinces. That is one of the things that we are working on so that the programming can be standardized whether it is in Newfoundland or in British Columbia and at any time you can tie into it.

So that is a program that is being developed or is being worked on. I guess it is like anything. Time is of

the essence, and we feel that hopefully we can have this done by the end of the year with all provinces.

Mr. Santos: Information by itself is not so useful if it is exclusive to one particular user. Information is useful if it is shared by everyone. What kind of security should we be concerned about when information that it will provide will be useful to the citizens?

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, with the gathering of information, one of the things that we did talk about at the ministers' meeting was that just as it is important to share information between the provinces and the various seniors directorates, seniors' organization in our province, one of the things that we have asked the gatherers of information to consider too is making it available to the public so that the public can also tie into this programming and tie into what is happening, you know, like I say, whether it is in Nova Scotia or Saskatchewan, and that is another component that we feel should be part of the information programming.

I know that it sounds simple when we talk about how you can Internet and talk to Australia from here, and why cannot we get this thing up and going right now? But I am told, and I think I share the concerns that are not only from Manitoba but other provinces, that getting it done sometimes just takes a little bit longer than the direction. This is one of the things we are trying to work on in a most expedient manner but, at the same time, we feel that we can still get, should have it ready possibly by the end of the year.

I am not that totally familiar with programming and working with computers myself, so I can only speculate that the people that are working on it are working on it expeditiously and trying to get it accomplished.

Mr. Santos: If the conference has been called by the federal government and somebody in the Health department federally is in charge and that somebody is later on concerned with other problems other than Seniors, of course, it will take long.

But if there is one particular executive director agreed to and appointed by the conference where all the provinces are represented and the federal government is represented, and its only concern is this particular objective, so that it will coincide with the 1999 year

of—what do you call it—the old person, then it will be really not so difficult to achieve.

* (1550)

Mr. Reimer: Yes, I cannot argue with the member. I think that we are anxious to try to get it going as fast as we can too and getting the information in there and the compilation of it all. I can only reiterate that the people are working on it, and we are very optimistic that by the end of the year we will have this up and going so that we can tap into it, like the member says, for 1999.

I do not know what more we can do here in Manitoba other than supply the information that is requested from us on a very timely manner, which we have done. The requests we have fulfilled are ongoing, and we can only be one part of a 11-part puzzle, a 12-part puzzle, I guess, pardon me.

Mr. Santos: If they are targeting the year 1999, then it is time now in the next conference to project this idea that there should be one office across nationally who will be in charge of the project; otherwise, it will not be officially done if it is ad hocery that is going on, depending on who is hosting what. If only one puny little official in the federal department is seconded to do that particular job for a particular period of time only during the conference, and there is no stability of information, no continuity, maybe the honourable minister will be the mouthpiece of this idea in the next conference. Would he be able to undertake that one?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Reimer: It is an ongoing committee that is compiling the information. We do not envision it as a one-time-only type of endeavour, because I think if anything it is a growing program, because there will always be programs that are being added to. There would always be improvements or modifications. There will always be the room for additions and possibly even deletions of programs as they possibly work their way out of the system.

So I do not see this as a one-time-only thing. We do not envision this either. We see this as an ongoing source of information for not only sourcing information but to update information and to put in more

information so that there is a continuous sharing of information. So it is an ongoing, it is a growing program, if you want to call it. It is certainly not a one-shot affair and then it is closed down.

The continuity would continue because, as the member mentioned, on the political level we may change, but on the organizational structure and the bureaucracy structure, that structure will stay in place. So that will continue to keep the programming and the information feeding into the system. So I see this as an ongoing process and not just a gathering of information on a one-time basis. I think that maybe clarifies it for the member.

Mr. Santos: It is still not too clear for this member. There have been four conferences of Seniors ministers. Is the person who was in charge of the first conference the person also in charge of the second conference, the third conference and the fourth conference, as if he were the executive director of the conference, or is it a different person at different times?

Mr. Reimer: I was just getting some history on the committee, and actually the committee has been around a long time. The member has mentioned four years or four meetings, but the seniors' committee and the directorate have been around for almost 10 years. So it has been an ongoing continuity of people and philosophy within the department.

There may have been some attrition in the department—in the departments, I should say—but the overall philosophy has been there, and it continues to be part of the directorate. So it is not as if it was just formed four years ago when the meetings started. It has been around for quite a few years. It is like any department. The philosophy of the department will stay, even though there may be some minor changes of personnel or people retiring or leaving or something of that nature.

So the continuity has stayed there, even though, as I mentioned before, it may be only four years since we have had meetings.

Mr. Santos: If that is the case, what committee is the minister talking about then? Who constitutes the committee? Who are the members of the committee?

Mr. Reimer: I guess there was always the minister and a staffperson that have gone to these meetings, minister or staff, I should say, so that each province would have the minister and the staff going. The constant among all meetings has been staff. So ministers may change, but the staff and the philosophy would stay the same. That would continue to go through from meeting to meeting. So I may be the Minister of Seniors this year, and next year who knows, but the staff and the continuity of the philosophy would still stay the same as it moves through to these meetings. So I guess staff is the continuity that goes to the meetings.

* (1600)

Mr. Santos: As generally is the case, politicians come and go. The office stays the same. The person occupying the office changes. The same thing with the staff, but the staff generally are not subject to the hassles of not being elected or things like that of an uncertain nature. Generally they have tenure in the civil service. This is staff people. You are saying these are the ones who are co-ordinating all these meetings all the time.

What I am asking is whether among themselves—they report of course to different jurisdictions. What I am talking about is like comparable to the executive director, let us say, of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. They have a single office, they have a single archive, single library, and a single address, not an address changing depending on who is hosting the conference.

Mr. Reimer: I guess one of the ways to explain it is that there is an organizational component that is made up of the staff into various committees. What they will do is the co-ordination of the various meetings; they would be the continuity of meetings, the staff and the functions that they would provide through the committee formations, so that as topics for discussion would come up or areas of concern, the committees would be the ones that would sort of direct the ministers through the meetings as to what topics should be covered.

So it is an ongoing process in the sense that they do meet, like I mentioned, two or three times a year. The provinces rotate. It is just like all meetings. Every

province wants to be a host or a co-host from time to time. We hosted it back in 1994. We were the host province at that time, and at that time it was the Honourable Gerry Ducharme who was the Minister of Seniors. So he was the co-host with the federal minister at that time.

But it was all co-ordinated through the seniors directorates and, you know, here in Winnipeg or Manitoba we were the co-hosts, so we got involved with the planning of events and functions, the various components of entertainment and food for the conference, and things like that. So it was something that each province would get involved with. The federal government would naturally be part of it again. They are part of the plenary systems to bring forth, you know, what they feel should be on the agenda. There is a continuity.

I know what the member is referring to regarding the Canadian Parliamentary Association. I am not that familiar with it, but I think that they work similarly, to a degree, because they move their meetings from province to province also. They also have co-hosts, you know, the minister of the host province along with the Speaker of the House from Ottawa would be the central figures, if you want to call it, for that meeting. It is the staff within their organizations that do all the legwork and get things organized, similar to what we do through the Seniors Directorate. So there is a similarity between what the member is mentioning regarding the Parliamentary Association and this one. It is a very good parallel, because they would work similarly to what we do in moving it around. I believe this year it is in Ontario, so the Speaker of the House for Ontario would be the co-host along with the Ottawa Speaker of the House and whoever would go would be—but the organization would still happen within the staff as a staff function. That is what we do, too, here with the Seniors Directorate.

Mr. Santos: This parallel at least does acknowledge that the hosting can take place from province to province, along with Ottawa's co-host. But, in addition, the Parliamentary Association had their own executive office, executive director, concerned exclusively with parliamentary matters, unlike a particular co-host province or Ottawa for itself, just a secondment from one of their officials in the Health department. There

is no particular organization quite separate from the conference itself. The secretariat has an independent office.

This is the idea that I am trying to impart to the honourable minister. When he attends the next conference, maybe he can bring that up as a discussion among all ministers, that they should establish an executive director and a permanent office, given the importance of the senior segment of the Canadian population.

Mr. Reimer: The member is bringing up a good suggestion in a sense of bringing more recognition or profile to the seniors because of the fact that, as he has mentioned, the population is growing, the percentage is growing. It is something that is worthy of possibly exploring a little further. We do have the availability to do a better analysis of it with this compilation of information, because I feel that should give us a lot of good emphasis and good knowledge as to what is happening right across Canada in all our programming, and where the emphasis should be and how we can interrelate and help each other in getting better programs not only for Manitoba but for the people of Nova Scotia who may be able to benefit from our information.

It is that type of philosophy of co-ordination and co-operation between the various governments that I think we can build upon. Once we start to formulate a more accurate co-ordination of information and sharing of information, that, as the member has mentioned, is maybe some way we start to look at that type of direction regarding a more formal structure for getting meetings and co-ordination between the levels of government. I look forward to receiving the information, so that, when we do start to do some more critical analyzing when the next meeting is coming up next year sometime with the Seniors ministers, possibly I will have a better position to be a more strong advocate for that type of philosophy.

Mr. Santos: If the honourable minister bases his argument in the conference on fact-based information, factual and projections, population projection, I do not think he will have any difficulty persuading the other provinces that there is a need for a national executive director for Seniors quite separate from the federal

government, because this will be a co-operative venture by all the provinces in partnership with the federal government, acting independently on its own for the interests of seniors all across Canada. It will be a secretariat of the conference, so to speak. Even if co-ordination may vary from year to year, depending on who is hosting, it will be channelled through that particular office. There will be one address people can write to and inquire information from. There will be one centre of information of all the available programs of government all across Canada for the benefit and for the interests of senior citizens.

* (1610)

Mr. Reimer: I think, as I mentioned before to the member, that the gathering of information and the availability of information is something that can only be of benefit to everybody in trying to come to directions for decision making. It is with that in mind—this is one of the reasons why we in Manitoba have been quite upfront in trying to go after this type of direction in the assimilation of information. We are of the opinion, too, that once there is this network, or this linking, of provinces through the programing that we will be able to localize it in a sense of people wanting information through Manitoba.

I think that the seniors would rather work through an office here, whether it is in Winnipeg or Dauphin or Beausejour or through an 800 number here in Manitoba, and get a made-in-Manitoba type of solution for their problems. Granted, there are problems that possibly are national in scope and wider in their parameters, and those are some of the things that would affect seniors. I think that the home-grown solution, a made-in-Manitoba solution, is something that we would be very proud of, not only as the member for Broadway, but as the member for Niakwa, so that Manitoba can boast of its own programing and what is the availability for seniors here in Manitoba, plus make available for informational resource programs, that people may want to know what is happening in other areas.

So I would hope that once the information and the gathering of information is available, it will put even more focus on what we can do to try to help our Manitoba seniors, and that they would look to us as the

resource, instead of Ottawa, because a lot of times in dealing with someone down the road, the home-grown solution usually is not what is applicable. So we would look at these programs but try to put a Manitoba flavour into it, so that we could localize it, or utilize it, and adapt it so people here in Manitoba would be of the benefit, and can look at the program through their eyes, if you want to call it, in making it work better. So I think that we would look at information gathering through that type of effort instead of trying to nationalize everything, in a sense of trying to broaden the scope so that it fits everybody.

There are programs that will fit everybody. There is no doubt about it. I think a lot of the things have to be brought down to a Manitoba flavour, and I think that is the way we would look at trying to utilize and gather information.

Mr. Santos: In a survey of longevity, one of the findings was that people who live in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, generally the west, live longer; they are healthier than the rest of the population. Given that factual information, would it not be our moral responsibility here in the west maybe to start such a kind of central location of new information for seniors, like new discoveries by gerontologists, by scientists effecting medicines and cures and prolonging life, all this information that justifies the creation of an independent unit, quite separate from the federal government itself, who will of course cosponsor all these conferences, but the output from all the conferences will be localized in a particular place.

The storage of information will be accessible nationally. Although, of course, each province will have its own subset of its own peculiar problems and peculiar solutions, there will still be a central information from which this can be obtained by anybody interested.

Would it not be a better system than every year trying to co-ordinate the conference in one location and then the next year another conference and another co-ordinating effort when it could have been a permanent kind of administrative task, quite routine for this secretariat that I am trying to envision for the honourable minister to discuss and bring forth in such conferences?

Mr. Reimer: I think that, like I mentioned before, the gathering of information is an ongoing process. I think that it is something that we can utilize. I would not look at it as being a one-time-only type of utilization of information. I would look at it as a growing factor and that the sharing of it would be continuous.

As we get new programs or we get exposed to new programs through some of our seniors groups throughout Manitoba and Winnipeg and they come up with some new ideas or some new programs, I think that these are the types of things that we would want to share with our neighbours and make them more aware of how we are doing things. Just as we are doing it, we would hope that the seniors groups or the seniors associations in other parts of Canada are also utilizing the database so that we can tap into what they are doing and we can sort of modify it to a Manitoba flavour and utilize it that way.

As for the idea of the sharing of ideas, it is always more informational when ministers do get together on a face-to-face basis to share information. I can only relate to a ministers meeting I just came back from regarding housing. It was very, very informative. On a one-to-one meeting with various ministers, you get a totally different type of approach and aspect as to what they are facing and how they are facing their challenges when you talk to them on an individual basis.

So there is a tremendous benefit in the one-on-one confrontations or meetings with some of our cohorts and our counterparts from across Canada. You slowly realize that a lot of the problems are the same, but a lot of times the solutions and the way you get to them are different. That is where you benefit from.

So I look forward to a lot of the various meetings that we have to go to. Sometimes we complain about meetings, but you usually come out of it with a better sense of direction and a new approach to doing things. I think that the more that you can do these in a very constructive manner, the better it is in getting involved with your decision making. So I think that the way we have it set up in the sense of working with the database, going with a ministerial meeting possibly on a yearly basis, I look forward to these occasions and, hopefully, you know, we bring back some betterments that we can incorporate for Manitoba seniors.

Mr. Santos: We are still on mission No. 2 here. I just thought of the idea of extending that central source of information which is talking about government programs here in Manitoba on a national scale. It is just the model being projected on a national level.

Now, there is a second component in the second mission here about the central source of information about community-based services here in Manitoba for seniors. So there is also a central single source of information for all these community-based services in this province available for seniors. Can the minister elaborate what he meant by community-based services, give an example of it?

* (1620)

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Reimer: I guess when we talk about community-based services, it revolves a lot of what I had said earlier regarding the centres in the community, the senior centres that we have around Manitoba. We have the support services for seniors, we have the resource drop-in centres. We have, I think one of the things, one of the community-based services is Meals on Wheels, that type of program. These are a lot of the things that I am referring to in that second line that the member is referring to.

Mr. Santos: I thank the honourable minister for that clarification and for that example, Mr. Chairperson. This Meals on Wheels, that is a private organization or a public one?

Mr. Reimer: The reference to Meals on Wheels is something, I think, that a lot of us are aware of. It has really served as a very, very valuable resource for seniors. It is strictly a volunteer program that people spend of their time taking meals around, calling on people, delivering meals. It usually comes out of a kitchen which is possibly even part of a seniors centre, a resource centre, that they will make the meals, the meals will come out of church kitchens. They have got involved with Meals on Wheels, but it has proven to be very, very popular, and it is a real source of involvement for a lot of seniors, not only to supply meals to seniors but for seniors helping seniors because that is usually who it is.

A lot of seniors will volunteer their time and their effort and their hospitality to drive and to drop off meals and be part of a regular route that they go on through various parts of the city.

I have talked to quite a few drivers. They are very proud of what they do, and they are very proud of who they serve and who they drop in to serve and who they drop into see and talk to. They set up quite a network of friends and communications through the Meals on Wheels program, so it has proven to be very beneficial not only, like I say, to supply meals to seniors, but it also serves as a very, very valuable source of activity for seniors. A lot of the delivery is made by seniors who voluntarily give of their time and their money because it costs them money to ride around in their cars delivering the meals, so it is a very strong humanitarian effort by a lot of people and it serves an awful lot of good.

Mr. Santos: It appears to me there are many roles in that kind of service-providing activity—meals provider, the driver, deliverer of meals, and the meals consumer, the one who eats the meal. Where do the meals providers get their resources to cook the meals? Do they get supplies anywhere or is it their own resources, is it a church or any other charitable organization?

Mr. Reimer: The ones that I have had the opportunity to visit are usually set up by nonprofit organizations or volunteer associations. I know from when I referred earlier to church basements I meant church organizations. I have seen those provide meals on wheels to certain sectors in certain areas of the city that they sort of block off, if you want to call it, as their—through the communities.

A lot of the funds are raised in the community, and some of the people that received the meals do pay for a certain cost of the meal. So it is not an exorbitant rate, but it does pay for some of the meal costs. So there is a collection of fees, not only for the people that receive the meal, but through the community drives, and the United Way funding is allocated to these various organizations and nonprofit associations. So they seem to manage themselves quite well. It has proven to be very, very popular, but there is a little bit of money raised here and there and everything, and it keeps the program moving and expanding too.

Mr. Santos: So is there one network of Meals on Wheels, or are there many little coteries of Meals on Wheels depending on the number of organizations providing such meals?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, I think the member has more or less answered his own question in the sense that there is not one overall program. It is called Meals on Wheels, but a lot of various associations take their proportion of it and will supply the meals within their certain area. So there is a myriad, as he mentioned, of associations, and they will supply within a certain block or a certain radius or a certain building that they have adopted in a sense as their program area.

I do not know the number of Meals on Wheels programs there are because there is not only Meals on Wheels here in Winnipeg. A lot of the rural areas, they are even having them, the towns. Brandon I know has it. Selkirk has it. A lot of the towns are setting them up on a volunteer basis. A lot of them we do not even hear about, in a sense, because it is not a central monitoring, you know, the program that they get involved with. So it is a need. People recognize the need. They get together and they start to supply the meals to these seniors, so a lot of even the little, small towns in rural areas will supply the meals.

Mr. Santos: Given that there are many organizations in many different areas, and the Seniors Directorate does not even know of some of them, do you keep a record of all these organizations in your database, their names, their addresses, their contact person?

Mr. Reimer: I may have said something and misinterpreted when I was looking at my notes, but we do have a record of the Meals on Wheels programs. There is a record available that says where these programs are being offered. So we do keep a record of it.

Mr. Santos: Do they get any kind of government assistance or aids or grants in money or in other form from any department of government?

* (1630)

Mr. Reimer: There are various components of supplying meals to seniors. There is the Meals on

Wheels that I mentioned, and there is also a congregate meal program that seniors can take advantage of where seniors will go to a location, a seniors' home or a seniors' hall or something, and meals will be made available there. There is, as I mentioned, a fee associated with the meals. It is not a free program in the sense that these people get the food for free.

There is some government funding through the congregate meal program where the various associations may have the availability of government funding. As I say, a lot of the programs are run by the nonprofit associations, sometimes churches and various associations like that, and they will get involved with the funding through various programs like that. I guess in an indirect way that there is government funding that is involved. We have staff who are involved with some of that congregate meal program and things like that. Yes, there is some government funding involved.

Mr. Santos: We are now taking a variant of that provision for meals, you call it congregate meals, and this one is sponsored by voluntary organizations or by government agencies?

Mr. Reimer: These are provided by the resource councils, and these are usually, as I say, in the building where seniors will gather and the seniors will literally come to that building for their meal. The meal will not go to them. They will come to the building.

Mr. Santos: Let us take a specific example. Let us take 185 Smith Street. That is a building. It is also a housing complex, some seniors. I understand there are some who are not seniors, although originally designed to be a seniors' complex. When they request a congregate meal, what happens? Who arranges it? Who finances it? Who benefits from it?

Mr. Reimer: The discussion that I was just having was regarding 185 Smith. Because it is also under my portfolio as Minister of Housing, I am fairly familiar with it. I know that Age and Opportunity are the ones that occupy some of that building, and they put on programs for seniors in and around the area. One of the things that they are trying to set up is a congregate meal program. They have not as yet set up a program in that building, and it is something that they would be responsible for. They would be the provider of setting

it up and charging the fees that are nominal or whatever they feel is reasonable. That would be more or less a process that I think that maybe the member is referring to, of who sets it up. A lot of times it is an association or a group of people who will want to run it out of a church basement or a hall or something like that or, as he mentioned, 185 Smith. They will get involved with it that way.

Mr. Santos: Take another setting, let us say a rural area, and let us say a church congregation. They want to sponsor a congregational meal for the senior citizens in their own community. Is the church the one that will provide all the personnel who will do the cooking, all the serving? What is the help from the government, the Seniors Directorate in that regard?

Mr. Reimer: If it is in a rural area like the member is referring to, the local church that wants to support it, they would be the ones that would physically be onsite doing the preparing of the meal and the serving of the meal and getting the advertisement of getting the people there and a lot of times even arranging for the transportation. So they would be the sole provider for it.

They do have the ability to make application to the regional health authority. There is what they call the support services grant, which will cover sometimes the cost of a cook or a co-ordinator or something like that. So they will sometimes go look at that area for some partial funding.

It is surprising how a lot of them will just do it out of the Christianity or the good, the humanitarianism, of the community, and just do it on themselves and make it happen. A lot of them are like that. They just set it up on a three-meal-a-week type of program or something along those lines, and it becomes very popular, and the seniors do not mind paying. They do not mind paying the small stipend because it gives them a social evening; it gives them an evening of—possibly even they tie in some games or some programs or other activities at the seniors' centres. They use that, not so much as a meal program, but as a social program. It becomes very, very popular.

So the people not only serve the nutritional needs on possibly a three-day cycle, or three-day-out-of-a-week

cycle, but also more importantly the social aspect of getting out and being involved and participating in some sort of activity. So there is an intangible benefit to the meal program, if you want to call it, which is the social program, which is even more important, you know, the activities.

* (1640)

Mr. Santos: In fact even the problem about seniors' loneliness, I think I have a feeling that the social aspect of the meal is much more important than the food aid.

Let us take another locale, West End Seniors building there on Burnell. They have a congregational meal program; apparently you can buy for \$3.50 or something a lunch. Do they get any help at all from government?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Reimer: The club that the member is referring to I believe does get a small Support Services to Seniors grant, and that grant is a grant to cover a lot of things. It is not necessarily just geared towards one specific area. The grant itself is multifaceted in how they use the money for the meal program. It is for a cook.

Mr. Santos: Going back to the Meals on Wheels, separating it quite entirely from the congregational programs, the drivers delivery role is done by volunteers in their own cars using their own gasoline and their own time. How long would such a program last if we ran out of such good people, unless there is some kind of systematic way of, I mean, replacing whatever resource they already used on a voluntary basis? Should there not be some kind of a place where they could ask for reimbursement for receipts, validated for use for such a purpose?

Mr. Reimer: It is a good point that the member raises, but sometimes it is amazing the good will and the willingness of people to serve and to be part of a sense of community in what they will donate as a sense of giving back to the community, and a lot of the drivers with Meals on Wheels may receive some gasoline allowance from the individual or the person that they are delivering the meals to, but a lot of them give it back into the program because they feel that it is a

donation in kind by themselves to the community, because there is a revolving of drivers and a lot of times the drivers will change and they may only drive once or twice a week and other drivers will do it and there is an abundance of people that want to be part of community. So we are fortunate that we here in Manitoba have got that type of people that are available.

Mr. Santos: Focusing on the meal providers, the voluntary charitable kind of organization that provides the supplies and the cooking labour and all the other input that they need to produce the meals, where do they get their resources if the United Way or other charitable organizations have limited resources also to give them? Do they have any place to go if they want to continue with their program and they run out of money?

Mr. Reimer: I guess we are fortunate that we have not had that much problem with these programs, or these people who are running Meals on Wheels. We do not seem to have a problem with them staying viable. They just keep on rolling. There is a goodness of heart by not only the people who are driving but the people who are donating and the people who are involved. Like I say, we are very fortunate. I do not know of any that have folded. The people pay for it to an extent, so the money keeps rolling back into it through donations and through the meals that they charge. The programs perpetuate themselves, so it has proven to be very, very beneficial.

Mr. Santos: Does it indicate that the receipts they get from the proceeds of the meals when they sell it for a fee to the ultimate consumer is at least equal to the cost or maybe a little bit of margin there, a little bit of profit?

Mr. Reimer: The Meals on Wheels has proven to be very cost-effective, because it has been handled by people who are very, very shrewd with the dollar, in a sense, and they make sure that the one dollar will go as long as it can. They are very, very conscious of their costs and their programs that they run.

They are quite shrewd in the management and what they charge, and they try to charge a minimum amount to, as the member mentioned, either break even or become very, very close to breaking even, taking into

account the donations that they do receive from various organizations and various philanthropic people who donate to the local Meals on Wheels program. So the management of it has been very, very critical, and it has proven to be quite beneficial to not only Winnipeg but all areas of Manitoba in how it has been handled. So I compliment the organizers and the people who are involved with Meals on Wheels because it has proven to be very, very successful, and more importantly, more cost-effective in their management of their food costs and their distributions. So it is very well managed.

Mr. Santos: Given that the recipient of the service, the one who takes the meal for a fee, are such that they are mostly probably a person with limited mobility and probably in a state of disability because they cannot go to the congregate meal locale, given that these are people who need the meal in any event, is there not some kind of a government responsibility there that these people should not miss any meal for lack of volunteers to deliver the meal?

Mr. Reimer: I think that when community takes responsibility to an extent of providing something that is voluntarily like this that they monitor it pretty close themselves. I have been in communities where they use the Meals on Wheels as a way to keep in touch with the seniors, to socialize with the seniors, and to make sure there is a quality of life that they can enjoy in the community.

It serves two purposes: it serves itself, as I mentioned before, of supplying a meal to the individual who maybe cannot supply for himself; but it also gives the ability for the deliverer of the meal to work on a checkup system to make sure that that person is in proper health, or not hurt, or in suffering of some sort.

So it has a spider web effect of keeping the community aware of looking after their seniors. That is something that a lot of communities are very, very proud of in how they operate their seniors' programs and how they operate their Meals on Wheels programs, so that there is a continuity of care in there. So I have a lot of confidence in the community itself in looking after a lot of the seniors, and it has proven to be very successful.

* (1650)

Mr. Santos: The impression is that they are successful because no one misses a meal? Is that a fact or just no one reported that they missed a meal?

Mr. Reimer: It is hard to say whether anybody is out there—I would not want to speculate and say that everybody is, you know, being fed, but at the same time I think that the reports of success are something that we can be very proud of, and we can feel that the community is itself looking after these programs in a very manageable way. I feel that the program can really work by itself in the community.

Mr. Santos: How long will it take, Mr. Chairperson, to pass this?

Mr. Chairperson: Three minutes.

Mr. Santos: I will reserve the last three minutes. You remind me, and I will use the time most efficiently.

Let us go to another unit here, the Manitoba Council on Aging. That is the next page. Who constitutes the council, other than Dr. Stuart Hampton?

Mr. Reimer: There are 15 members. They are from various areas of Manitoba. It is intended to try to represent people from all areas of Manitoba, the city of Winnipeg, rural areas, gender. I can send you a list of that if you like.

Mr. Santos: Thank you. Do they get any stipend for attending council meetings?

Mr. Reimer: Yes. We can send you the schedule on that, too.

Mr. Santos: How long do they serve?

Mr. Reimer: Usually, it is about two years.

Mr. Santos: Since the council was instituted, has there been any changeover of council members?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, there has been. I would think that we have changed over at least 50 percent.

Mr. Santos: Do they get re-elected as many times as they would like to?

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, I think that what we look at is trying to rotate on about a two-year basis or so. The chairperson, Mr. Stuart Hampton, has been the chair now for—I think he is just going into his third year. But some of the members have been there for two or three years. There is a turnover of seniors. Either they move or they feel that they will move on to something else.

Mr. Santos: If one wants to serve there as many times as they have energy and resources and talents for, would they be allowed to?

Mr. Reimer: Oh, I think that we are always willing to—you know, people with talent, you like to keep them around as long as you can, certainly.

Mr. Santos: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, the Chairperson will remind me of the time.

Mr. Chairperson: I will remind you.

Mr. Santos: Given the overall responsibilities of the council, I would like to focus now on the first listed responsibility there on page 3. It says: identifying opportunities for government by adapting programs, policies and institutions to accommodate the aging populations of Manitoba.

Could the honourable minister give us a specific concrete instance of opportunities for government which the Manitoba Council on Aging had identified for the Seniors Directorate?

Mr. Reimer: There was a program that we heard about in Ontario called Through Other Eyes. It is a program to make people aware of seniors' difficulties and problems that they perceive. We vented that through the Council on Aging, and their opinion was that we could utilize that here in Manitoba.

They also came up with the idea of having an awards program for seniors of distinction or organizations or businesses that have contributed to the well-being of seniors, and that is something that we now initiate on a yearly basis that the Council on Aging recommended. So, Mr. Chairperson, those are two of the incidents of where they have come up with opportunities for the government.

Mr. Santos: If the conference of Seniors ministers progresses to the one they envision, all this information would be immediately available.

Mr. Reimer: That is right. With the compilation of information, that is exactly what we would want to make available for all provinces to be aware of.

Mr. Santos: Does the minister promise to pursue that kind of development in the conference?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, we have made the commitment that that is one of the directions that we want to go.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Chairperson, let us go to the second responsibility then: where appropriate, making specific recommendations and program policy and legislation to better reflect seniors' changing needs, issues and concerns. Now I would like to ask the honourable minister if he can identify any specific information or recommendations about programs, policy and legislation, precisely the handiwork of the Manitoba Council on Aging.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, a very specific recommendation, as I remember, when we were having the council out to one of the rural areas. I believe it was up in Dauphin area, in fact. The council was up there, and they had pointed out to us a difficulty they had with the scheduling of bus routes in that particular area. The council, we approached the Grey Goose Bus Lines to see whether they could try to accommodate the seniors in their travels through that area. I believe that they responded favourably to our recommendations, and that was something that came straight out of one of our trips up into the other areas.

We have always tried to get into some of the rural towns because they do have problems that we feel that we should be addressing too, so with that I will let the Chairperson move it.

Mr. Chairperson: One quick one.

Mr. Santos: One quick one, Mr. Chairperson. During the fiscal year 1997-1998, how many consultation processes through meetings with relevant organization groups and individuals have been done by the Directorate?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, with a quick answer.

Mr. Reimer: She has had numerous meetings. I emphasize her getting out and meeting with the community as much as is possible.

Mr. Chairperson: 24.1. Seniors Directorate (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$401,200—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$233,800—pass.

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$635,000, for Seniors Directorate, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This concludes the Seniors Directorate.

The hour now being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m. and time for Private Members' Business.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Madam Speaker: Bill 201 (The Crime Victims' Bill of Rights and Consequential Amendments Act), Bill 203 (The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2)).

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—An Act to Amend an Act to Incorporate the Dauphin General Hospital Foundation

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that Bill 301, An Act to Amend an Act to Incorporate the Dauphin General Hospital Foundation; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant la Fondation de l'Hôpital général de Dauphin, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill to this House today and make but a few comments on the importance of passing this legislation here in the Legislature. The town of Dauphin has a long tradition of providing quality health care to the citizens of our community, and not just the town of Dauphin but the whole community, including the Parkland. The Dauphin Hospital is a regional centre serving a wide area.

One of the strengths of having the hospital foundation is that it is able to bring in ideas and solutions to challenges and input from a wide range of people. I want to take some time to congratulate those who have served on the Dauphin General Hospital Foundation in past years and also commend those who are serving today in that capacity.

I want to take a minute or two to congratulate the people who will be affected by the amendments that are being put forward in this private member's bill. They were the volunteers and the staff and nurses and doctors, administrators, all the staff at the hospital who will benefit, I hope, through our actions here in the House today.

This bill allows for representation. One rep each from the town of Dauphin, the Rural Municipality of Dauphin, the Dauphin General Hospital Health Care Auxiliary, the medical staff and the Parkland Regional Health Authority. It also allows for six members to be elected in an annual general meeting. The bill also establishes one-year terms for appointed members on the board and three-year terms for elected members, two three-year terms for elected members.

The bill also sets out the rules for filing a vacancy in the case of both elected and appointed members. Finally, the bill provides for the dissolution of this corporation with a two-thirds majority vote, so I am very glad to be able to speak on this private member's bill today and look forward to the passage of this bill to assist the Dauphin General Hospital Foundation in its day-to-day operations and for the betterment of health care in the community and district of Dauphin. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 33—Offloading of Road Maintenance

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), that the resolution be addressed.

“WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has made deep cuts to rural economic development initiatives and programs over the past several years; and

“WHEREAS many municipalities have suffered as a result of severe cuts to operating grants, increased policing costs and the offload of responsibility for a wide variety of services and programs; and

“WHEREAS rural infrastructure development has not kept pace with the need; and

“WHEREAS the Canada/Manitoba Infrastructure Program was of benefit in improving municipal infrastructure, there are currently no plans for a second infrastructure program even though traditional infrastructure initiatives such as roads and bridges, as well as water and sewage facilities, need upgrading; and

“WHEREAS municipalities are being called upon to maintain an ever increasing portion of provincial as well as municipal roads; and

“WHEREAS this has placed an additional and increasing financial burden on local governments and municipalities; and

“WHEREAS the Union of Manitoba Municipalities has recognized the decline in Provincial support for road maintenance as a problem, and has passed Convention Resolutions dealing with this issue; and

“WHEREAS efforts must be made to ensure a vital rural economy and thriving communities, which requires adequate infrastructure.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to consider funding for adequate road maintenance across Manitoba; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly request that the Provincial Government stop offloading road maintenance to the municipalities.”

Motion presented.

Mr. C. Evans: I rise today to speak on this resolution, I believe a very important resolution as part of the opportunity for us to speak and bring our concerns to this House during our private members' hour.

Madam Speaker, this government in the past nine years has in steps—and when I say in steps, has begun or began some eight or nine years ago to begin to offload responsibility—their responsibility on provincial roads, gravel and others—onto municipalities and onto communities in rural and northern Manitoba. They began with offloading 2,000 kilometres of roads onto municipalities. They began there, making deals with municipalities trying to make it an issue, so that if you took this road, we will do that road. We will maintain that road. Many municipalities then did not know and to this day still do not know how they are able to cope with the needed maintenance on those roads that are offloaded and the others that have been offloaded in the past couple of years.

Madam Speaker, then they went and they talked about—well, I believe it was the former Minister of Highways who decided that he was going to take away the dust program in the province of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: A dirty deed.

Mr. C. Evans: Another dirty deed, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has indicated, another dirty, nasty deed by this government, Madam Speaker, by the former Minister of Highways saying that it is going to save somewhere between \$400,000 and \$500,000, and I will deal with some of those issues as far as dust controls later on, in a few minutes, within my speech.

Then, Madam Speaker, some few years back, out of the blue, behind closed doors, we find that this government and this minister at the direction of the

cabinet, I am sure, decided that he was going to offload maintenance on more municipal roads within municipalities.

While he decided that he was going to do this—I do not know how he came about to doing it, because I remember the issues at that time, and we raised it with this minister—well, we were making deals. There are comments in some of the—we were going to make a deal so that it would be easier for the municipalities to take care of their roads. Those are some of the words that the minister used himself: we will make it easier.

* (1710)

An Honourable Member: Stick to the truth.

Mr. C. Evans: Well, the minister knows I always stick to the truth. Then, in House here one time, he tells us: well, I had the opportunity. I gave them the opportunity. I told them that we were going to be doing this, and that we were considering it and we were going to give you the opportunity, so I will make a deal taking over, offloading more roads, the maintenance of more roads in their municipalities.

However, the minister failed in many cases, failed. He should remember this and he does remember this. He should remember that in many cases some of the municipalities he talked to during UMM convention were not made aware that this was the proposal that this government wanted to do.

Question Period, I stated the facts. Some of the municipalities that I talked to and who wrote to me stated: we were unaware; we were not informed; we were not told. The minister will also remember a meeting that the municipalities in the Interlake region had in Teulon, where one of the reeves got up and lambasted this minister for their decision to go ahead and offload and provide more roads for the municipalities to take care of. The minister will remember that.

Madam Speaker, as the resolution states, infrastructure is very important for economic development and for our rural communities—very important—as I have stated before and members on this side of the House have stated before. Now the further

point, when you talk about the offloading of maintenance, is that we question this minister about what he has done and what his government has done with respect to the abandoning of rail lines. I brought this issue up with concerns about Highway 6. There is another need. Now we see not only in papers, and I believe I read today or yesterday in the paper—today, I believe—about the increased truck traffic that we are going to have in this province of Manitoba for interjurisdictional trade. Back and forth. A good example in my area, in my constituency, and I have mentioned this, is the Continental Lime.

When the issue was raised with the minister before, and I talked about it, he said: well, how many trucks are they using now for their import and export of coal and product—50 percent? Well, now, of course, and I said into the record what the Continental Lime spokesman said about how that was a lifeline for their company, and now the general manager from Calgary told me himself that it is going to increase. Of course, it is obvious. It is going to have to increase their use of trucks to a complete 100 percent. Not little trucks. Not little four cylinders. Not little four wheelers, but big trucks. Massive trucks with a tremendous amount of load carrying from the plant down Highway 6 down to 68 and across through The Narrows and down as far south as the Perimeter and then onward.

So it is very important. Now we can appreciate that conditions at times do not provide the best availability to do certain maintenance on certain roads, but we on this side of the House and this member, if the minister wants to look through Hansard, for eight years, nine years, have always, always asked that, when I talked about roads, not only in my constituency but in other areas that I have travelled, I have always said: we cannot expect pavement paved with gold from one point to the other; we cannot expect that. We appreciate; we understand. Our members here understand that, but maintain them, upgrade them, do the best you can. But what has been happening? Down with the budget every year. Down a little bit more. Down a little bit more. Jobs being lost; the minister at the time wanting to offload; the latest offload of municipal roads or PR roads through the municipalities.

Madam Speaker, we find out that he also wants to shut down highway yards in different areas, more jobs.

What about the maintenance that these Highways employees were doing? They would not be there.

Now, I have received and I know that other members on this side have received many calls and many letters with respect to the maintenance of the roads. I will put on record today that in my constituency some of the folks who have come to me about paving a specific road, I have said to them, I have said about the cost, but I have said do you not agree with me more that if the road was upgraded properly, if the road was taken care of, if the maintenance was there, that, for now, would be a part that would be all right for the traffic. Now, I understand that traffic is traffic. The minister, the government and perhaps we would say this too, well, if there were tons of traffic on this road, yes, we would certainly consider doing that. I am using the word "tons," but, of course, it is vehicles that cross that line.

We have asked, I have asked this minister to provide counters on certain roads because of the traffic, because of the extra truck traffic. Another area in my constituency that is seeing an awful lot of truck traffic is from a little community and a business called Vidir Machine. The business has multiplied over the past five years. They haul their product from Vidir to B.C. to Florida to California. The road system around that area—and there are other businesses there—need an upgrading of the road. Maybe we do not know about paving it or AST, but good maintenance on that road because it is heavily, heavily travelled.

It is rural economy, rural infrastructure, a need. Is this minister listening? I do not know. I am hoping he listens. I mean he is listening; whether he is going to react to it or not, I do not know. I hope they are listening over there because I am sure some of the rural members on that side will agree with me on this. The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed)—I spent a few years in his constituency—the same situation. Maybe a little bit more pavement in that area than perhaps in the Interlake, a little bit more, but we can understand—[interjection] Yes, at that time. The only fact of the matter is sometimes we are not sure where that pavement goes.

Madam Speaker, I want to use my resolution as an encouragement to this minister and to this government and tell him that we will support initiatives that he will

implement into maintaining the rural roads. The key in the resolution, I believe, is the infrastructure. It is so important. The key to this is maintaining our gravel PR roads to the main market roads, because the traffic is increasing, perhaps not in population, but in tourism.

In products, you have your Continental Limes, you have your agricultural traffic. Since the rail lines abandoned their lines to certain communities, they have to travel from one area to the other hauling their grain. What has that brought on? The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) will agree with me. I know he agrees with me. It is wonderful to see King Harry agree with me. I am always supportive when the Minister of Agriculture supports what I am saying.

An Honourable Member: Happy birthday. Like that sign in Riverton, happy birthday, Cliffy, baby.

An Honourable Member: How many is it?

Mr. C. Evans: Thank you very much. Fifty.

I want to bring up two more issues. I can say that I am feeling it, because when I travel in the province of Manitoba, my back hurts me more when I have to travel over all those rocks and everything. The municipalities have put in resolutions against the offloading. Only 31 of 115 municipalities are in the program. Most of those now are saying—they have signed three-year contracts—that it is a bad deal. They cannot handle it financially and resourcefully. The fear is that they may not be able to get the best job done for the buck.

* (1720)

Madam Speaker, I want to get back to one of the offloading—or I believe offloading, even though it was a cut—the dust control program. I know that in the past few years once people realized and understood that this program had been cut, it has become a tremendous hardship and a burden for a lot of communities and a lot of people on these provincial roads.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I want to just, into the record here, say that we all received this letter, all 57 members, inviting us for a barbecue on Highway 325. The minister received it. I

do not know if he has responded. I know I am going. I go by there a lot of times, a constituent of mine, and visit with him the odd time. I do not know if the minister has responded. I know and I appreciate one thing, and I will say on record. I appreciate the fact that the minister is responding to a Mrs. Painchaud [phonetic] on 233, but I would like to see some response to this too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the letter states, and this is the point that I want to make that the roads, the offloading and the maintenance has also created a hardship. The wording of this invitation is given in the hope that somewhere, someone will undertake to bring the subject matter before the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and that the Legislative Assembly will start to be concerned about preventative medical care. Using medical care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has become a tremendous issue because of the offloading and the cutback of the road dust control program that this province has undertaken to cut.

I just want to indicate that I have travelled not only roads in my constituency but other roads. I have for the minister, to pass on to him as an example, of part—this is gravel that was put on one of the roads by this offloading by this government. This government should respond to the needs of the people in the communities, upgrade the roads, keep the roads maintained properly. Thank you.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to spend a little time talking about rural infrastructure. I think the member would like me to talk about that.

I am going to correct a number of the misinformation that he put on the record both today and one other day last week that he spoke on a grievance in this House and talk about a little bit of reality and really the truth that is going on.

I do not think the member will dispute that there is dramatic change happening in rural Manitoba in terms of transportation. I do not think anybody could deny that point. We have had infrastructure challenges as long as we have been around in this province, no matter who was in government. There is always the man beyond ability to respond.

When we came into government in 1988, clearly the government of the day had not done a lot to get the roads up to shape. They had run up great big deficits, required us to get the fiscal house in order. Yes, some decisions were made along the way that we had to reduce some of the things we were doing in order to get our fiscal house in order, but I want to tell the member that happened in every province in this country because it was time to live within our means.

Certainly roads are important to keep the rural economy strong. We all know that railroads have been a big and integral part of transportation in western Canada, but I think the member would also remember that back in the '60s and the '70s, a significant number of rail lines were abandoned by CN and CP. That put certain amounts of grain onto roads because it had a little further distance to travel to the next elevator. Then along came the federal government again looking at changing the transportation act in 1994 where they streamlined the process for railroads to abandon rail lines. There is no question railroads have gone on with that game and more and more lines are being abandoned. Again, that means more grain traffic, particularly any traffic going to a rail line has to travel further on a road.

If the member will just look at the map, he will see that there have been a lot of large elevators built across rural Manitoba in recent years on the main lines. So there is no question that the grain companies and the railroads see the future of movement of bulk products by rail involving a lot more road use to get to the rail.

Now, there has been an evolution of the trucking industry across rural Manitoba. Instead of one or two small trucks to a company, you will see many companies with 10, 12, 15, 25 trucks, and they are hauling grain for long distances. Some of it they are picking up in farmyards and hauling to an elevator. In many cases, they are picking it up in farmyards and hauling it to a processing plant like in Harrowby or to the hog industry where they—I do not really need that, thank you very much.

Well, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) always likes to be smart in the House, and maybe that is what got him here, and it will sure keep him on that side of the House for a long period of time.

The member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) has raised some issues that I want to respond to but, at the same time, let us set the framework in which we live today.

The members opposite wanted us to work on roads, and when there is a traffic volume of 8,000 or 9,000 vehicles a day, if we do work on the road, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he gets upset because it is not in his constituency. But he is the same member who comes along and asks us to do various things to help his constituents. I would defy him to go out there and find people who do not think we have improved the safety on that road. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister has got the big opportunity at this time. You are out of order. The honourable members will have their opportunity, I am sure, to put their—[interjection] The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Findlay: While the federal government has stimulated the abandonment of lines, they took away the Western Grain Transportation Act, which meant that the transportation costs by rail increased for many farmers twofold, threefold, fourfold, \$10 a ton to over \$40 a ton. So in many cases the farmer says, I cannot pay that bill, it is too high, so we are doing other things with that grain product. That is why you have the evolution of the hog industry, that is why there is more processing going on here. At the same time, the elevator companies are moving more and more of the grain that comes in the front door of the elevator by truck, 20 percent, 25 percent, 35 percent.

I mean, there is an evolution of change here driven by economics, and everybody has freedom to make decisions. And, yes, there is an impact on an infrastructure, there is no question about it, whether it is municipal infrastructure, provincial infrastructure, or the national highway system.

I am really disappointed that the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) would not recognize where the real issue is. The real issue is that the federal government in this country is the only federal government in the western world that does not contribute to the infrastructure system of its country. We have an east-west system that is failing, and we are forced as a province to put more and more money into

the major infrastructure system just to keep it up to speed in terms of what the truck industry and the transportation industry needs. He does not support us in asking the federal government for the taxes they collect on the road system to put something back into the road system or reduce the amount of taxation—

Point of Order

Mr. C. Evans: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to make a comment to the minister that we on this side do support the infrastructure program, and we do support this government or any government in promoting the federal government to put their fair share into infrastructure in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order. It was clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Findlay: I appreciate the member's comment. I am glad to hear that there is support, because that is the biggest problem we have got, that they will not contribute to our infrastructure. Meanwhile, we as a province and the municipalities are left with a burden that is very difficult to handle. When these roads were built, whether municipal or provincial, many of them in the '50s, '60s, they were built to carry trucks of 44,000 pounds. Today, B-trains are running 138,000 pounds. What do you expect the road structure to do? It just cannot handle it.

In terms of trying to deal within the realities of which we live, we have many initiatives involving municipalities. Over the years, up to 115 municipalities have some kind of agreement, contract, written, verbal, whatever, with us where they will do grading, snow clearing, street cleaning, various kinds of programs, not programs, but just business relationships with us. It totals 115 municipalities, towns, villages, R.M.s across the province. It is ad hoc in most cases, but it is a relationship where we work together. Building on that, I have had municipalities over the years come and say: we will do more of that because we can do it cheaper

than you. That is what I like to hear because that means we have more money left over to put more gravel on the roads to do more maintenance. Bingo, I think that is what the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) was asking for.

* (1730)

So a couple of years ago, to carry on that discussion, we had umpteen meetings with the municipalities to work out how that might be done. We worked out an arrangement and agreement that we could both live with. At the end of the day, we contracted with some 31 municipalities to carry on winter and summer maintenance on those roads, because they had the equipment, they had the manpower, they have the know-how, there is no question about that, to maintain those roads. They have done an excellent job of it, excellent job. We have talked to the municipalities, we have talked to the UMM. Everybody is quite happy with the agreements that currently exist.

Now they are asking: when can we renew them? Well, we are in the second year. We will wait and see where we are at the end of the second year going into the third. These are three-year agreements, but the 10 percent that we have saved in the maintenance on those roads we are putting back into those exact same roads in increased gravel for those roads. So you can improve the roads by saving money on maintenance and putting more gravel on those roads. I think that is exactly what the member was asking for. So everybody wins.

Look, I like a member to come here and really talk about the facts and the truth, and I am trying to do that, and it is an agreement that works for everybody. Municipalities have better roads, roads are better running through their systems so there is less travel on their roads, and everybody wins.

The member talks about removing dust control, and I really wish he would read the budget last year and this year where we have a million and a half dollars in the budget for dust control on gravel roads over 250 vehicles a day, \$1.5 million in the budget last year and this year. So his statement that we remove dust control is false, is simply not true, but he came, he said it the other day in his grievance, and he said it again today.

He is not respecting the facts that are in front of us. I am a little disturbed that the member would take that position. It was not there three years ago, but it was there last year and this year. Please catch up with what is going on. [interjection] Oh, the member does not want us to do it on those roads of high volume where the dust is the worst.

The member talks about Continental Lime, talks about rail line abandonment. I do not know of any province that could afford to take over those rail lines and operate them. We support short-line operations where they are economically viable, and certainly OmniTRAX and northern railroads is a working model, because we worked with CN to be sure that they put an economic unit on the table for the short-line operator to bid on. We try the same process for every rail line that is up for abandonment and try to be sure that it is an economic unit, is packaged and available. If it is not economic, then the government should not be involved, nor should anybody be involved.

At the end of the day, the shipper, whether it is a farmer or a fertilizer operator will choose whether it goes by rail or by truck and, neither good news nor bad news, more and more people are choosing to move product by truck. It has been an evolution for 40 years in rural Manitoba and rural western Canada. I am sure that member, if he is just 50 he will remember that in his hometown 30-40 years ago, pretty well every commodity came into that town by rail, and slowly and steadily trucks have taken more and more of the business.

There is good news there because we have a trucking industry creating 25,000 jobs in this province. It is growing. If you look at the statistics of north-south trade, we have about 700 to 800 trucks crossing at Emerson and Pembina every day. North-south trade is growing. Our exports to the U.S. have tripled in the last five years, good news related to the trucking industry. So the pressure is always on us to maintain that infrastructure, the major infrastructure, secondary infrastructure and tertiary infrastructure.

The member could probably understand why we do respond most rapidly to the roads of highest volume. We cannot allow those roads to fail or the bridges not to be strong enough to carry the weights. For instance,

we are rebuilding the decks on the north Perimeter over the Red River. It is \$8 million to rebuild those two decks. You can hardly see what we are doing there. When it is over, you will drive over it in two seconds, but it is \$8 million of expenditure. It is incredible. We cannot afford to allow that road to fail or the bridge to be closed. It is absolutely impossible.

So instead of spending \$8 million on roads in his constituency, it is happening there. That is why it is so critical that we get \$20 million, \$30 million, \$40 million a year from the federal government, from the taxes they are collecting, to help us get to the roads further out. The feds are collecting \$140 million, \$150 million a year in Manitoba in road-related fuel tax—\$150 million—and last year and this year, we are getting zero. That just cannot continue forever because the request lists for roads in Manitoba—when I came into this portfolio almost five years ago, I asked what was the request list—we had approximately a hundred million a year for capital—and it was \$600 million.

Today it is \$1.5 billion. That is requests because primarily municipalities want roads. We know bridges that have to improve. We know surfaces on the Trans-Canada have to be continually replaced, so the demand is escalating. The demand is escalating because there are more trucks, bigger trucks, heavier trucks, and there is road wear and tear. There is no question about it.

The member also made comments that we have not increased capital, that, in fact, we decreased capital, I think. Again, check the budget. It went up \$7.1 million this year. Now, I know it is not going to go far enough, but do not say it is decreasing when it is really increasing, and that is the truth. [interjection]

A \$7.1-million increase is a \$7.1-million increase, and I am happy that the member is now going to support us in terms of the federal request, that they must put some money into the transportation system. This initiative to try to get federal money has been going on for, unfortunately, 10 years.

We got so close in '92, we got close in '95, and I cannot understand with all the support there is across this country from every interest group that I know of that is interested in roads, all saying the same thing to the federal government, that they continue to deny us.

I am meeting with all the ministers again tomorrow, and the issue is back on the table. Hopefully, sooner or later we are successful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I must say that I agree with much of what has been said here on both sides of the House. I do support the resolution presented by my colleague the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans). At the same time, I do understand the minister's frustration.

An Honourable Member: He noticed that.

Mr. Struthers: It was quite clear, yes. I do empathize with the fact that the federal government is very reticent to take part in a National Highways Program. We have always recognized that on this side of the House, any infrastructure. I would love for another infrastructure program in this province, and I think it is not right that the federal government will not take part in that.

I also think that it is wrong for the federal government to be taking fuel taxes out of this province and not putting them back into the road system. We have been clear on that. We agree with the minister that the federal government should do its fair share in helping with what is a looming crisis in this province when it comes to our roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one fact that I was interested to read about is that most of the provincial funding is directed to major highways. About 25 percent goes towards the Trans-Canada, the Perimeter and Highways 16 and 75 and 5. It seems to me that those are roads that the federal government at one time put some money into. If I am off base on that, then I am sure somebody will correct me. [interjection] The member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) just might do that.

* (1740)

At one time the federal government did take that fuel tax and put it back into those highways. There is no doubt that the federal government is part of the problem. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my worry is that, as we abandon rail lines and as the federal government

continues not to show leadership in the area of transportation in the province of Manitoba, we continually look to the rural municipalities to pick up more and more and more of the tab. My colleague from the Interlake noted that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 31 of the total of the rural municipalities in this province have opted into the picking up of provincial roads. When you have that small percentage of R.M.s opting into this situation, it tells me that this is simply an offload by this provincial government onto a junior level of government.

It is not right for this government to complain about the federal government offloading onto them and then turn and offload onto the R.M.s. I have had several opportunities to talk with R.M.s in the Parkland area. A couple of them who had opted into this plan opted in because they said that the province was going to dump them on us anyway. They were going to give us these roads, and the last time they gave us these roads, they did not give us enough money to operate them. So we are in a position where we have to either say no or take these provincial roads on and then raise local taxes.

The minister shakes his head, but this is a concern that was expressed to me by the rural municipalities. These are people who know their budgets intimately. As the minister does and as we on this House understand, there is going to be tremendous amount of pressure on our highway system over the next little while. More product moving into the province, out of the province, it is key for economic development that we have a good sound transportation network.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister referenced the amount of money that he is being requested to invest in our highways, in our provincial roads, and I can understand that it is a huge amount of money. Just looking at the number of calls that I get in my office just in Dauphin and our area, I can understand that looking at the whole province is going to be a large sum of money. There is no doubt that the minister has, at his finger tips, studies that suggest that he should be putting more money into roads. There is no doubt that there are technical and empirical data that suggest that our roads need to be upgraded.

At the same time, over and over and over again, there is anecdotal data that is available to us that we get

in our constituencies all the time. I was challenged by some of my constituents to go and try out PR 328 not so long ago. So I went and I drove my car across 328 from Waterhen over to Gypsumville, over to No. 6, and I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the road was a mess. It makes no sense to me to leave a road in that kind of condition when you have in the area of Waterhen and Mallard and Meadow Portage and the reserve at Waterhen as well those who are interested in moving forward on economic development ideas that they have. It is essential that they have that connection to No. 6 without having to go all the way down south to Ste. Rose and across through The Narrows to No. 6. It makes good economic sense for that area in my constituency to be connected with a suitable provincial road.

Now, I understand that the minister can look at a long list of projects four feet deep on the top of his desk, maybe, and I understand he does not have a moneytree growing out the back of the Legislature here someplace, but this is a good example of how some investment would really benefit this area tremendously. Another example is Provincial Road 276 from Waterhen north to the Waterhen reserve. Here is a road that has been surveyed, has been partly built up and paved already, but for some reason stopped. It was around 1988—I forget what the event was then that meant that project had to be halted, maybe it was the provincial election, I am not sure—that project came to an end and it has not been continued since then.

I want to draw attention to another specific example, and here is one that I think really typifies the problems that we are going to see in rural Manitoba with highways. It is Provincial Road 274—I hope I get all these numbers right—it is provincial 274, north of Gilbert Plains, and over to No. 10 highway hooking up with the community of Ethelbert. Here is an area where the CNR several years ago used a flood as an excuse to abandon prematurely the Cowan sub leaving farmers in the Ethelbert/Pine River/Fort River area out of luck. They had to now look at alternative ways of getting their grain to market. One of the things that is happening in Gilbert Plains is that there are plans to build a much larger facility, a larger elevator. Now, what you are going to see are all the farmers from that Ethelbert area using Highway 274 down through Gilbert Plains and then west on No. 5 highway.

Again, I was challenged and took up a farmer, a constituent of mine, as he drove me in his grain truck north out of Gilbert Plains along Provincial Road 274. The road is too narrow to begin with for farm implements to be meeting each other. If you got a combine and a truck and you are hauling grain, that road is not acceptable as far as the width is concern. Potholes all over the place, potholes were evident, it was a rough ride all the way, and it is not like I never had the experience of driving a grain truck before. This was an awful road, and it is going to get more beat up as more farmers from that Ethelbert area use it coming down through Gilbert Plains. So there is another big challenge that faces the minister.

My colleague from the Interlake talked about the dust control program. I have an excellent example in my constituency. The road that branches off No. 5 highway into the little community of Makinak, a little community in my constituency. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Makinak there is a wheat Pool elevator that does a pretty brisk business, serves a very large area in my constituency. Farmers from north of Ste. Rose, farmers from south of Laurier haul their wheat to this elevator. Number one complaint about I believe it is PR480 is that it is too rough and it gets beat up. It is just rough and costs people a lot of money with damages and those sort of things. But the latest complaint that I am getting over and over is the dust control problem. I think what is happening here is partly due to the weather. We got an early spring, we got dry conditions up in the area, and every time a grain truck goes by, anytime any vehicle goes by along the road, all the people living along PR480 get blasted with dust.

I am told that there has been a lot of calcium put down on that particular road and that even if we had a rain, some of the excess calcium that is in the road will serve to keep the gravel together, the dust together, and it will not fly up. That is good to know, except I wish it would hurry up and rain. In the meantime, it might be a good idea if the Department of Highways could find out how much it would cost to send the water truck down there to give it a spray every now and then, just to help these people out. They have enough problems with a rough road to try to work with, let alone having dust problems on top of that.

* (1750)

Another example that I want to bring to the attention of the House is PR No. 68, and I bet I am not the first one to bring this to the attention of the minister. A friend of mine took the bus, Grey Goose or Greyhound, I forget just which one it was. I do not want to make a plug for one or the other, so I will just include them both in that. She took the bus from Winnipeg and swore up and down she would never take that particular route again because of the roughness of the road. This is, I am sure, an example that has been brought to the attention of many regional engineers in the Department of Highways, and it is my hope that at some point this road gets a lot more attention.

The point I want to make here is that it is not just grain, it is not just lumber, it is not just hogs, it is not just the agricultural side of it, but there is a whole other economic side to why we should have a strong network of highways in this province, and getting Grey Goose or Greyhound to easily use No. 68 highway is good for the Interlake. It is good for the area up through The Narrows to Ste. Rose. So it makes sense to me to try to keep up with the amount of work that needs to be done on Highway 68.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to conclude by saying that—[interjection] There are so many, I could go on for so long. [interjection] It is a good program. The people of Sifton appreciate the work that is being done on 362. But what I want to encourage the minister is that everybody knows that the highways are going to be under a tremendous amount of pressure over the next several years, and a slight increase in the budget this year I do not think is going to be enough. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce even has suggested that 20 million extra dollars in spending is going to be maybe not even enough, but it is saying that you have to spend at least \$20 million in increase.

The message is very clear to the minister, that somehow he has to be able to, whether it is partnering with the federal government, which I understand is a tough job, but also it is so important that we keep our highways in good shape that the minister is going to have to find the kind of funds that my colleague for Interlake is talking about or we are really going to be missing out on the economic boat, I am afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So thank you for this time to put some comments on the record.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): The resolution brought forward today by the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) is of great interest to me. I remember several years ago as a municipal councillor, we had the responsibility for maintaining the roads in the municipality, and I can remember sitting around the table with my colleagues on council and discussing some of the concerns we had over maintenance of roads and trying to come up with better ideas of how to maintain them and perhaps have the savings that might come with it.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things we fought with in our minds and at the table was the fact that several times of the day and throughout a week and over the year, we would be sending maintenance equipment down a provincial road to access the roads that we were maintaining, and several times the maintenance people would advise us that they were meeting the Highways road coming down the road that they were travelling. We thought to ourselves, well, there is going to be a more efficient way to do things. There has to be a better way to do things, and we developed an idea that we would present to the government of the day for a reasonable fee.

I should point out that in our discussions, one of the things that we said was the money that is saved—I mean, we felt we could do it cheaper to start with because we were there and we were going up and down the road, and also it would free up the Highways maintenance crews to do the major roads, and, hopefully, they would improve at the same rate.

We made our presentation to the government of the day, and they discussed it with us, and that is really as far as it went. It became a discussion and they thanked us for bringing forward a new idea, a new proposal that might enhance every side of the equation, the highways in the Province of Manitoba, the local R.M. and the municipalities. We also thought of it perhaps as an economic venture because if we were to assume some responsibility for some of the provincial roads, perhaps we would be able to employ another person. Instead of a seasonal worker, we would have a full-time employee. When you get a good seasonal worker and you can offer him full-time employment, it is certainly an incentive for him to stay within your municipality and provide the services.

Unfortunately, at the time, perhaps it was ahead of schedule or ahead of the idea of what governments were doing and what their plans were, but when the government of the day brought forward this idea again to the municipalities, I thought it was a great idea. I thought here is something that is coming to fruition, something that we had discussed, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that it was 20 years ago or so that we started these discussions. I thought the government had taken the right approach. They talked to the municipalities on an individual basis, presented to them the cost of operating the particular roads that we were prepared to turn over to the municipalities should they want it.

I sat in on some of the discussions with the minister and some of my municipalities and my municipal councils, and I reminded them that in past—and I think if everybody is being fair and honest, if you ask your municipal councils at one time or another, they have stated—and I am saying this in general terms but I believe it to be true—that they probably had suggested that they could maintain certain roads better than the provincial government simply because they were going up and down them on a regular basis, and they really knew what was needed and when it was needed and where it was needed most.

When we met with the municipalities to discuss this issue with them, some of them were excited about it. They thought it was a great idea. They thought at last we are going to be able to fully utilize our equipment, our machinery, the people we employ, and we are going to do it on the budget that has been presented by the province.

As it turned out, some municipalities chose to do it, and I have talked to them since that opportunity was presented to them. Some are finding that it is a bigger job than when they first took it on, that they thought it would be easier for them at the time. They are finding that like all things there are always changes in your plans, and there are always things that come into play that affect it. I think they really did find some were having difficulties doing it for the prices that the province was doing it for.

Perhaps that is what the members opposite are referring to when they talk about some of the

frustrations. I have talked to municipalities that have taken it on and have found great efficiencies in doing it. In fact, the money that has been provided to them is not being fully used because they are passing on those roads on a daily basis, and they are able to use the extra money to upgrade certain roads that they are travelling on.

I know one municipality, in particular, found it great because they had an employee that was working about 0.6, and they were able to move that person up to a full-time employee whom they desperately wanted to keep because they recognized his abilities. He was a great young guy in the community, young family, kids going to school, and that is part of the process, too, in the sense that, if you can offer those opportunities, then these people will stay in your communities and grow and therefore rural Manitoba will benefit from it too.

But I do want to point out that I do not think I met with any municipality that felt any pressure to participate in this particular idea. It was presented. The facts were presented to them; the numbers were put in front of them. The question was asked: would

you be interested in participating in this particular program? We did stipulate that it would be a three-year agreement that they would enter into, and the idea behind that in my mind was the first year you would experience maybe some difficulties in your planning or in your organization of schedules and things like that. By giving them a longer period of time, they would be able to find more efficiencies and more abilities that they could utilize the dollars that were available to them in a better way.

The instances that I think of and the communities that I think of, I think if you went back out to them today, they would say they would love to have this program enhanced, have more opportunity—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour now being six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 28, 1998

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