



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



VOL. XLII No. 91B - 8 p.m., MONDAY, JUNE 28, 1993

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 28, 1993

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

LABOUR

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Chair, I would like to suggest the committee temporarily interrupt its proceedings so that the Speaker may resume the Chair so as to determine whether there is unanimous consent of the House to vary the sequence of the Estimates consideration by allowing the Department of Urban Affairs to be heard in the committee outside of this Chamber prior to the Department of Northern and Native Affairs, and whether or not there would be unanimous consent to allow a second department to begin hearing Estimates tonight after 10 p.m. inside the committee outside of the House.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to temporarily suspend the proceedings of Committee of Supply to deal with the order of the Estimates? [agreed]

IN SESSION

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask you to please canvass the House to see if there would be unanimous consent to vary the order of the Estimates for the section of the Committee of Supply meeting outside of the Chamber in that the Department of Urban Affairs may be allowed to be heard prior to the Department of Northern and Native Affairs, as well to canvass the House to see if there would be unanimous consent to allow a second department, for tonight only, to begin its Estimates after the hour of 10 p.m., in the section of the committee sitting outside of the Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): Is there unanimous consent of the House to vary the order for the Estimates to deal with the Department of Urban Affairs outside the Chamber prior to dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Northern and Native Affairs? [agreed]

Is there unanimous consent of the House to allow permission to start the Estimates of Northern and Native Affairs after ten o'clock this evening only, if required. [agreed]

The House will now convene in Committee of Supply.

URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good evening. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This evening this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Urban Affairs.

Does the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs have an opening statement?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased, at long last, to present the '93-94 Estimates for the Department of Urban Affairs.

The message contained in the Estimates is the same one that my cabinet colleagues have emphasized throughout the current legislative session. Specifically, they have said that Manitoba faces many fiscal challenges which require difficult decisions to be made. This is true when we deal with remote northern communities, it is true for rural Manitoba, and it remains true for the residents of Winnipeg and their civic administration.

My department has kept the city informed of the financial realities facing the province in determining budgets and allocating grants for the '93-94 fiscal year. In the wake of reductions in federal transfer payments to Manitoba, we informed Mayor Susan Thompson early in the city's budget cycle of the need to adjust our budget priorities. As a result, we have reduced provincial grant support to the city by 2 percent. We do not believe this 2 percent reduction will be too onerous on the city. Indeed,

we have asked more of our own provincial departments, our civil service and the citizens that we deliver services to. In these difficult financial times, we have all had to examine our spending habits and decide where we can reduce expenditures.

During this fiscal year, the City of Winnipeg will receive \$62,540,000 in grants from my department. Items of significance include the funding the city receives for the Dutch Elm Disease program that has been transferred to my department from the Department of Natural Resources. The province recognizes the importance of preserving Winnipeg's magnificent heritage of elm trees and has doubled its commitment to this program from \$350,000 to \$700,000. In addition, my department has made a commitment to provide \$151,400 towards the growth of replacement stock for trees lost to Dutch elm disease along city boulevards and in park sites.

The province has changed the Transit Operating Grant so that it is now unconditional. This has been done to provide the city with greater autonomy and to encourage it to operate as efficiently and productively as possible. The new funding formula will allow the city to change its operation if it desires and to retain the full amount of any operating efficiencies achieved.

The province has made \$15.2 million in commitments under the urban capital projects allocation. That commitment includes \$8.1 million for infrastructure renewal projects. These projects will not only upgrade existing infrastructure within the city but will also create jobs and have beneficial effects on the economy. The province is committed to infrastructure renewal and strongly supports the initiatives of the city in this area.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in addition to providing financial support to the City of Winnipeg, the Department of Urban Affairs continues to work with the city on ways of strengthening the structure of the municipal government and improving the quality of life for all of its citizens.

Before going any further, I would like to pay tribute to a man who made many significant contributions to the growth and character of Winnipeg. Stephen Juba was the mayor of the City of Winnipeg for 21 years. His leadership has left a lasting mark on Winnipeg. You can see evidence

of his service to the public and of his accomplishments throughout the city.

The city has recently undergone some other major changes. After 13 years of dedicated service in office, Bill Norrie retired from the mayor's chair. Winnipeg now has a new mayor operating with a new smaller City Council that reflects the amendments made to The City of Winnipeg Act. We are confident that these legislative changes will result in a more effective and efficient city administration.

My department looks forward to a positive working relationship with Mayor Thompson and her colleagues at City Hall. I anticipate that a legislative program will be introduced this fiscal year which will bring further amendments to The City of Winnipeg Act including some revenue improvements. Well, we have already been through all of that, respecting the collection of parking fines in particular.

The City of Winnipeg will also benefit from VLT revenues beginning in 1994. Ten percent of net VLT revenues generated in Winnipeg will be provided unconditionally to the City of Winnipeg. In addition, we will commit 25 percent of VLT revenues to other economic development occurring in Winnipeg.

* (2010)

With respect to urban development, the final projects under the renewed Core Area Initiative are being completed. Funds have been allocated to an archeological centre in the redeveloped Johnston Terminal building at The Forks and to the first phase of The Forks Plaza. A total of \$931,000 from the Core Area Initiative will be spent on these projects with Manitoba's share being \$310,300.

Like other projects under the agreement, it is a joint undertaking of the City of Winnipeg, the province and the federal government.

Still at The Forks, we have budgeted \$1 million for The Forks Renewal Corporation. These funds represent the province's portion of the commitment that was made by the three levels of government under the equivalency agreement for The Forks. The funds will enable the continuation of the redevelopment of this important area of the city of Winnipeg in a way that is sympathetic with its historic significance.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have also included \$2.5 million in this year's budget for a new urban

redevelopment agreement. We are still hopeful that we will be able to convince the federal government to enter into a tripartite agreement that will address the needs of Winnipeg in the 1990s. If we are not successful, we will explore with the City of Winnipeg the potential for a partnership in a bilateral agreement. A strong and vital Winnipeg remains a priority of our government. We hope to be able to announce the terms of a new agreement once all of the negotiations have been completed.

I would like to close by touching briefly on a couple of items concerning planning. The Capital Region committee established by our government continues to meet regularly. Members will recall that this committee gives Winnipeg and its municipal neighbours an opportunity to work as equals. We are confident that through their efforts, the competitiveness, attraction and quality of life in the capital region will be enhanced.

In the coming year the committee will continue to focus its efforts on developing the Capital Region strategy which is one of the components of Manitoba's overall sustainable development strategy. Plan Winnipeg has now been approved. It will help set the City of Winnipeg on a course for orderly planning in the crucial years ahead.

My staff of some 18 people have come through an eventful year. They have dealt successfully with a variety of challenging issues and these dedicated professionals deserve a great deal of credit for their very hard work and fulfilling the mandate of the department. This is a very small department. These individuals do a great deal of work and have demonstrated regularly great professional expertise and dedication. I thank them for that.

Mr. Deputy Chair, that concludes my introduction. I invite questions and discussion on these Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Urban Affairs for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), have any opening comments?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I will make a few opening comments, then perhaps the member for the Liberal Party would like to do the same, and then we could get into some questions of the minister.

I note that the Urban Affairs department was set up as a separate department in 1971, and I am wondering whether it may be time to review the role of the department and see what it really has accomplished and is accomplishing, because I would not want to see the department be simply a make-work project for another minister. I really wonder what the minister has been doing over the last couple of years. I know that we were talking about a third Core Area Initiative, and I see nothing has been done in that area. Now just before an upcoming federal election, there is some sign that there might be something perking.

— Perhaps it is time, when governments are looking at reducing costs and so on, that they might look at getting rid of some redundancy in the cabinet perhaps and look at reassessing some of the cabinet positions with a view perhaps to amalgamating some of the departments.

I say that with the utmost respect for the minister, because of all the ministers I have dealt with since I have got here, I have to say that in the short time that I have had dealings with him, he is probably the best of the bunch so far and seems open to talk about different ideas.

I would like the minister to respond to that because, by his own admission, it is a very small department. It only has 18 staff positions in the entire department, and I do not think that any department's longevity should be carved in stone. I think government should reassess, every once in a while, the role of departments with a view to making things perhaps more relevant to the times.

So either this minister should get more active and do something about a third Core Area and take a more activist role in this area, or perhaps they should look at another role for him.

Anyway, with that, I would pass to the Liberal critic to make her opening comments, if she will.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks. Does the critic from the second opposition, the honourable member for Crescentwood, have any opening remarks?

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I thank the minister for his comments, in particular his kind words for the staff. That is always good to hear, when the minister is in public complimenting staff who do spend a lot of hours and basically serve the people of Manitoba.

The comments from the official opposition I find quite interesting. I am pleased to hear that the member for Elmwood is talking about efficiencies in departments. That was certainly one of the questions that I had, and I am sure the minister will take an opportunity to comment on that in terms of looking at the viability of this particular department as it exists and if there should be any potential changes to structure in government.

I know we, as the Liberal Party, have been calling on government to look at restructuring since at least '88, and I am very pleased to hear the same sentiments from the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), given most of us lived through the NDP government for over 10 years and certainly saw a lot of inefficiencies. So I am pleased to hear this positive approach, and I will leave it at that. I would like to basically get into questions and discussions.

I think what we may do as we go through the department, rather than going section by section, if there is agreement from the minister, is probably pass the sections until we get to the Minister's Salary and then we can ask our questions at that point. Although you want to have your staff here, and I do not know if you are able to do that unless there is leave for the deputy minister to be here.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic of the second opposition party for those statements. Under Manitoba practice, the debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer the consideration of this item and now proceed with the consideration of the next line.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce his staff. Maybe the committee can give me the will of how they decided they want to carry on this evening.

Mr. Ernst: I have no objection to handling matters as outlined by the member for Crescentwood, with the exception that if you get to the Minister's Salary and my staff are prohibited, not all of the questions may get answered to your satisfaction, simply because I will not have all of the detail. So if you are agreeable, then I would prefer to have my deputy minister present.

I would like to introduce, for those who do not know, Mr. Jim Beaulieu who is the Deputy Minister of Urban Affairs.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Would there be unanimous consent then for the minister to keep his staff here during the Minister's Salary? [agreed]

Then we are going to go ahead and we are going to pass the lines necessary, and we will come back to the Minister's Salary.

Item 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$231,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$43,700—pass.

(c) Administrative and Financial Services (1) Salaries \$158,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$36,900—pass.

2. Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg (a) Unconditional Current Programs Grant \$20,500,000—pass.

(b) Unconditional Transit Operating Grant \$17,100,000—pass.

(c) General Support Grant \$8,240,000—pass.

(d) Dutch Elm Disease Control Program \$700,000—pass.

Resolution 20.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,540,000 for Urban Affairs, Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

3. Urban Policy and Agreement Management (a) Salaries \$436,400—pass.

(b) Other Expenditures \$129,800—pass.

(c) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Core Area Renewed Agreement (1) Payments to Other Implementing Jurisdictions zero—pass; (2) Payments to Other Provincial Departments zero—pass; (3) Departmental Expenditures zero—pass.

Resolution 20.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$566,200 for Urban Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

4. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg \$16,000,000—pass.

4.(b) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Core Area Renewed Agreement (1) Payments to Other Implementing Jurisdictions \$310,300—pass; (2) Payments to Other Provincial Departments zero—pass; (3) Departmental Expenditures zero—pass.

4.(c) Urban Initiatives \$1,800,000—pass.

Resolution 20.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,110,300 for Urban Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

* (2020)

We will now return back to 1.(a) Minister's Salary.

Ms. Gray: The minister in his opening comments talked about the Core Area Initiative and negotiations that were continuing on. I am wondering if the minister could give us an update of where those negotiations are at.

Mr. Ernst: Well, I have been up and down with this program so many times and had great confidence it was going to happen, and you know the range or the spectrum of anticipation has, I think, covered just about every juncture along the way.

Currently, we have simply put to the federal government that if they are going to participate in a third Core Agreement, it has to be with real money. We are not prepared to accept recycling of existing programs simply by placing them under the umbrella of a core area agreement, when the money and the program is going to be delivered and is being delivered at the present time in Winnipeg. I mean it is just not on.

If they are going to participate, they are going to be part of a Core Area Initiative, then they have to provide real money, they have to provide new money. The original proposal was not acceptable. We went back to them and told them that. The Premier and the Prime Minister had a little visit, and we had expected some changes to occur back in January. That did not occur—changes, not with respect to the Prime Minister's job, but with respect to their outlook on this agreement. There was a new minister and a number of matters have intervened in the process.

Virtually, everything comes to a halt when all of a sudden there is a new minister, and then that new minister now with huge additional responsibilities in addition to those that were assumed for being lead minister for Manitoba. To be fair, he had a lot on his plate in a big hurry in terms of taking over the complete Agriculture portfolio, having his own Grains and Oil Seeds portfolio, then taking over responsibilities for lead minister for Manitoba.

So there was a lot of work on the table, and I must say that we launched, initially at least anyway, into this issue with some confidence that it was going to be dealt with. Then of course what

occurred was the federal budget process, which saw everything being held back, constrained and so on, created some further difficulties, but still anticipation that money could be found internally within departments of government.

I do not care, quite frankly, if it is old money coming from Ontario, as long as it is new to us. Nonetheless, then, of course, the Prime Minister resigned, and then we had the leadership and all of this going on which kind of occupied a considerable amount of the federal government's time and virtually things just did not happen during that process.

I am hopeful now that that is all out of the way. We have a new Prime Minister. She will be embarking, with a new cabinet, upon attempts to reconfigure the government, and I am hopeful that this issue will be one of those things that can be included. We have been unrelenting in our pressure upon the government to try and conclude a new agreement. We recognize very well the high desirability of a new agreement; we recognize the kind of good things that occurred in past agreements; we recognize some of the things that did not work so well in the last agreements as well. Those kinds of things, I am sure, will be changed should a new agreement occur.

The bottom line is, and the Premier has indicated it on a number of occasions, that if in fact we do not reach some kind of an agreement with the federal government at some point, and when that point is has not yet been determined, we are prepared to go it alone with the city in an attempt to try and at least address some of the issues that confront Winnipeg.

So in a sense, I did not want to carry on too long, but that is basically where we are at and kind of how we got there.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there have been comments made by governments and people who are involved in Core I and Core II about the positives of the program, the negatives and some evaluation has been done. If the province is fortunate enough to get some type of agreement from the federal government for another initiative, and I will not call it Core, but another initiative of Phase III, can the minister tell us what types of changes he would like to see in that type of an agreement, and would the emphasis be on rehabilitation programs, social programs and

education or would there be more emphasis on infrastructure programs, or might there be a combination?

Mr. Ernst: It is hard to say just at this point. There were a number of general areas that were dealt with: urban aboriginals, Main Street, educational programs, training programs, things of that nature. I mean, there were a number of issues of broad general categories that were addressed.

What I have committed to all along was that I would like to hear from those people who are the ones who are going to be the beneficiaries. I would like to hear what they have to say, where they think the money should be spent, where they see their lives heading and how it can be assisted by this. It is fine for a whole host of urban planners, social workers and a variety of other professionals trying to create their view of what these people should be doing and how they should be affected. It might be pretty interesting to hear what they have to say for themselves, where they see the benefits lying, where they see the assistance that is required, and where they ultimately see themselves headed. So that public hearing process is something that I have agreed with all along.

Whenever you deal with the federal government, I have come to learn, is that the money coming from any line department—and that is generally where it comes from in the federal government is from a line department—it always comes with strings attached. Sometimes you have to live within the range that those strings allow you to operate, and it does not always allow you to do exactly what you want to do. Sometimes you have to adjust your thinking to meet the program guidelines of federal government departments. So within those constraints, I guess we are pretty open to what we might be able to do.

Ms. Gray: Was there not an evaluation that was done of Core II though that had some specific recommendations in terms of what worked well and what did not, or a final report of some sort?

Mr. Ernst: Let me point out that this document was produced on behalf of the Core—I do not know whether you have seen that—which basically talks in glowing terms about most things and really did not get into anything else than kind of stressing the positive. And there were lots of positives to stress, I do not mean to demean that for one second. Part of the original Core II Agreement was a detailed

evaluation to be done, to spend—I forget, but I think it was in excess of \$100,000 or more on detailed evaluation. When it came down to the end on whether we were going to spend that money on detailed evaluation or fund some fairly worthwhile projects, we opted to fund the projects and not spend it on the evaluation. We did not do the detailed evaluation that was contemplated initially.

* (2030)

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if for some reason an agreement with federal government for a trilateral agreement is not possible, and at some point the minister has to basically come to the realization, if that ever happens, that that is not possible. You have indicated that you are prepared to enter into a bilateral agreement with the city, does the minister have any idea as to what kind of dollars the province is looking at, and are those dollars—is there a different amount of dollars depending on whether it is a bilateral agreement or whether it might be a trilateral agreement? Any sense of that?

Mr. Ernst: We had talked with the city and the federal government at \$25 million each. I think the city has budgeted in their five-year capital plan for that level of contribution. I do not think it matters particularly whether we are with the federal government or without the federal government. Our contribution level would be in the same area at \$25 million for five years.

Mr. Maloway: Just to expand a little bit on the question of the Core Area, you had said that you would go alone with the city. I was wondering when you would make that decision. At one point are you going to give up on the federal government if it does not participate and go it alone in terms of—I would like some kind of date on this—[interjection] Yes, like just before the election.

Mr. Ernst: But do not tell me when the election is going to be.

The whole question of leveraging the federal government into an agreement is a matter that has certain potential windows of opportunity. One of those windows of opportunity is a federal election campaign and/or just ahead of a federal election campaign. So I do not care, quite frankly, if that is an election gimmick, if you want to use that terminology, as long as we get the money. As long as the program is in place, I do not care how it

comes. If somebody wants to use it for political benefit, that is the name of the game.

Mr. Maloway: So having said that then, would the minister tell me at what point he plans to get really active with the federal government? Is now the time to be phoning them and being aggressive with them, or does he think maybe another month or two might do? When is he going to do this?

Mr. Ernst: I have been doing it for a year and a half with a variety of different people. The players change and the budgets change and so on, but I mean, as I indicated earlier, we have not let up on this issue at all. It is not a question of getting active.

The fact of the matter is, we have been and are continuing to be and raise it every time we meet and several times in between to determine what potential is on the horizon for this issue. It is a constant issue to be dealt with with the federal government.

Mr. Maloway: So presumably then, once the federal election is over and if nothing has been done at that time, then that is the point in time that the minister will go to the city and do it with the city then as opposed to the three.

Mr. Ernst: I do not want to commit to any particular time lines, but there are, as I said, windows of opportunity that occur from time to time that avail themselves for issues of this type.

Mr. Maloway: The member for Crescentwood had a resolution last week on the Core Area, and I remember making a few comments on that. One of them had to do with the boundaries, and I felt the previous boundaries of Core I and Core II tended to be fairly political in their drawings. In Core I the boundaries ran way out into Fort Rouge and so on. I did not see how that was all core area. Then all of a sudden the federal Conservatives came in, and in Core II the boundaries were running way out to St. Boniface.

It just seems to me, you know I have a couple of problems with that. Another problem that you have, of course, is that if you have wide boundaries that go beyond the core and you only have so much money to spread around, you spread it kind of thin.

Mr. Ernst: I think, in terms of a third agreement, I just want to make one comment with respect to what we have been able to accomplish up to this point, in terms of the new political minister for Manitoba from the federal government, is that we

have concluded an agreement to merge North Portage and The Forks into one corporation. With the new mayor, the new minister and myself, we have been able to reach agreement on that, and we are proceeding on that. We hope to get that accomplished sometime this fall and to save some, I think, significant operating monies and some greater operating efficiencies in terms of the overall operation of those two public corporations.

The question of the boundaries was always a difficult one, and I admit that it is pretty obvious why boundaries got to be where they were. But there were three parties to those agreements, and the three parties and their representatives of those days ultimately determined that was acceptable to them.

In Core I, for the provincial government it was my former colleague and now Mr. Justice Mercier. In the second Core Agreement, it was your Leader, Mr. Doer, the member for Concordia, who ultimately had agreed on behalf of the provincial government that those boundaries were adequate. But very often, the issues that are trying to be addressed do not know any boundaries—geographic boundaries, that is. I think what we have talked about in all our discussions up to this point was that we would try and aim at issues and try and solve specific problems with this new agreement, as opposed to trying to simply carve up a piece of real estate and say this is what is going to happen in this area.

If somebody needs training and is on social assistance, and has the potential to remain there for a long period of time, it does not matter where they live within the city boundaries. If we are going to try and target some of those things, we will try and target on the basis of need and problem areas as opposed to geographic areas.

Mr. Maloway: I take some comfort with what the minister has said, although history kind of shows that things do not work out that way. They use the best of intentions to direct the money to those in need, but the political boundaries decisions of the past—and I do not want to absolve any party of its role in there. I mean, it is just a fact of life, just the nature of the beast, having a tripartite situation like this means that each party is trying to get the best deal it can. So you have something that, I guess, probably should be unworkable, but I assume it has worked out all right in spite of it, but I cannot see

where it could be overly efficient having a structure like that.

* (2040)

Now, I wanted to ask the minister about the situation regarding St. Germain and Headingley. Headingley has been gone now for, I guess, about a year and St. Germain is still talking about it. Could you give us a bit of an update on what has transpired in those areas?

Mr. Ernst: With respect to Headingley, it no longer falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Urban Affairs. It is part of rural Manitoba at the moment. I take some credit and, I think, outdid the Minister responsible for Decentralization when in one fell swoop we added 1,300 or 1,400 people to rural Manitoba.

They are doing well. Part of Headingley is in my constituency, and I visit there from time to time. They are doing very well. They have a sense of community that I do not think anyone really appreciated, the fact that they were in fact a rural community for a long, long period of time, whether the boundary said they were in Winnipeg or the boundary said they were not. The fact of the matter was that they collectively, both north and south of the river, had the sense of community that is generally found in most areas of rural Manitoba.

When they put out their tax bills this spring there was a 15 percent reduction over levels of last year. At the same time, they invested significant capital in terms of acquisition of a building for their municipal offices and fire hall. They also acquired a couple of vehicles to start a volunteer fire department, and they had a very successful weekend on the 13th and 14th of June with the Headingley Homecoming. I think they are well on their way to having their self-government, shall we say, operations conducted in the fashion in which they had anticipated.

St. Germain—I hear from Dr. Shapiro who is their spokesperson from time to time—brought a petition to the Legislature almost two years ago, I guess, now, requesting us to undertake a study similar to the study that was undertaken by Headingley under the Pawley government and under the leadership of Urban Affairs Minister Doer at the time. They wanted to have us undertake that study on their behalf to determine whether financially it was viable for them to separate.

I asked them to hold a public meeting in St. Germain subsequent to that to determine the level of interest. It is one thing to sign a petition; it is quite something else to come out to a public meeting and express your views. The member of the Legislature for that area held a public meeting in St. Germain, actually in St. Vital, but for St. Germain residents and somewhere in the area of 400 to 500 people showed up. I mean, it was a very, very well attended meeting, and I heard an awful lot of very good comments from people with respect to what they had anticipated for themselves in the future and so on.

Their situation is somewhat different in some respects to Headingley but in many respects it is also the same. Their attitude was not quite the same. Headingley started off on the basis that they wanted to secede. They wanted to be on their own and they wanted to form their own municipality. I did not get that sense of feeling from the meeting at St. Germain. I think there are an awful lot of people that are interested in some recognition of the fact that they do not receive all the services that the serviced area of the city receives, yet they are taxed the same. They are looking more for some recognition of the reduced services they received in the form of a tax reduction than they are necessarily about succession.

I have been encouraging the city all along. I have written to the mayor two or three times offering suggestions as to how they might be able to recognize that concern of the residents of St. Germain. Up to this point it has not been terribly successful. The city has tended to simply ignore the issue, although they have paid some service to the fact after the councillor for the area and Dr. Shapiro last appeared before executive committee, I think, in the last two or three weeks, that they have asked for some 60 days to look at it and so on.

I think I am prepared to wait until they consider what they might do and then we will see where we go from there.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to ask the minister about the whole business of hydrogen, I think it is. In California there is quite a move as you know to legislate within five years or so a certain percentage of vehicles that have to be burning other than fossil fuels. There is technology out in Vancouver, B.C., I believe that is quite revolutionary in the hydrogen field. If the member knows anything about hydrogen, evidently it burns

clean and it is a good thing to be looking at right now. I wonder if the government has given any consideration to helping the city or encouraging the city to perhaps convert its fleet of buses and so on to hydrogen.

I recall 20 years ago, at least, the Schreyer government had electric cars here, they had Renault 12s, I think they were from Minnesota, that they had converted to electrical propulsion and they were trying them out here in the government fleet. They had one here right in front of the Legislative Building and it was motoring its way around.

Now, the program did not work all that well evidently over time, and that was 20 years ago, but the point is that that government was at least showing some forward thinking in the area of electric cars and so on. Now, surely the technology has developed quite a bit over the last few years and I think this government should be looking at something to do with electric cars or hydrogen cars or whatever.

Now, could you tell me whether you are looking at it or whether you have done anything at this point?

Mr. Ernst: The government has a Department of Energy, it has a Department of Environment, it has a number of areas quite apart from the Department of Urban Affairs that deal with a great number of these issues.

From time to time, when those issues occur then in conjunction with Winnipeg or other municipalities, pilot projects or test projects or considerations are given to any number of these kinds of issues, but they are not addressed directly by the Department of Urban Affairs.

Mr. Maloway: The minister does sit in the cabinet. I would expect that he would be aware of any initiatives on this part, so I would ask him whether anything is being done in this area, and if not, why not?

Mr. Ernst: I said there are a number of issues energy-related in other departments in the government, not in the Department of Urban Affairs. The fact of the matter is, I think that, there being those kinds of issues and so on, they are being evaluated on a regular basis, not only by ourselves, but also by, for instance, the city fleet vehicles or city transit or those kinds of things.

I remember the days of the electric cars. I was at City Hall at the time when those electric cars came along and did not work.

An Honourable Member: They worked.

Mr. Ernst: Well, why are they not widespread if they worked?

Nonetheless, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is not going to serve anybody's purpose to get into an argument about whether something that happened 20 years ago did or did not work. The fact of the matter is, a number of those kinds of things are being evaluated, but they have to be evaluated in the sense that it is not simply good enough to say, yes, we can—we do not have the luxury anymore of spending huge amounts of money just trying these things out to see if they work. They have to have careful evaluation based on technology, expert opinion and engineering analysis before any of these kinds of things are undertaken.

* (2050)

I know there are a number of vehicles both in the Crown corporation fleet and, I believe, in the city's fleet that are fired by propane, ethanol and a variety of substitute fuels to try and determine if they are more efficient, better than the standard gasoline or diesel fuel.

There are a number of issues being undertaken, considerations being undertaken, alternate fuels being given consideration from time to time, not necessarily because of the Department of Urban Affairs, but because of technologies that come along.

Mr. Maloway: Following from that then, what has the minister done specifically over the last year to encourage the city to get involved in curbside recycling and other recycling sort of areas?

The Minister of Urban Affairs may be able to argue that he does not have direct jurisdiction in these areas. Nevertheless, he should be involved in this area, at least trying to get some results from the city.

Mr. Ernst: Interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, whenever you make a suggestion to the city, they have their hand out—a suggestion of any kind. In fact, they have their hand out even when you do not make any suggestions to the city.

The fact of the matter is, for a long period of time, there were conditional grants being given by provincial governments to the City of Winnipeg.

Those were rolled into block grants back in the late 1970s by the Lyon government. When those block grants, now having been in place for 10 years or so, all of a sudden get forgotten, that is sort of the given. The bottom line is the block grant. Now give me the conditional grants over and above that. It makes it difficult.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

With respect to recycling programs in general, what the Minister of Environment has done, and I think should be commended for—and you read a little bit about it. I guess it was either in today's or yesterday's paper with regard to the Grocery Products Manufacturers association and the negotiations that he has been having, I guess as a result of the WRAP Act, to come up with basically a new industry.

That is a private-sector funded industry to recycle not just newspapers and tin cans, but to recycle virtually everything that these people produce. They recycle it at their cost, and they are the ones then that are driven to find solutions or uses for their materials.

It is quite one thing to collect it, but we could be like Toronto and have a curbside recycling program that costs millions and all we have are warehouses full of empty liquor bottles and warehouses full of paper and things that cannot be used because there are no or very limited uses for them.

The pressure is on the industry, I think, in general, and they are responding. Manitoba appears to be a good opportunity for a pilot project, so they can take the province of Manitoba and say, you have one kind of major metropolitan area with two-thirds of the population located in it, and that may make some sense in terms of a curbside operation. Then you have the question of outside Winnipeg, which may make some sense in terms of a depot type of operation.

I am kind of excited. As a matter of fact, I happen to sit on a committee that is dealing with this issue, which is why I know a little bit more about it than might otherwise be expected. I think there is an opportunity here to create not only some very good sustainable development activity, but to create an industry along with it, that industry without government money, hopefully, that will carry out the kinds of things that we want to be carried out.

I think there are some great opportunities here. I am hopeful that they all come to fruition and we do gain the benefit of that.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I would like to ask a few questions and refer specifically to the Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg under Capital Grants, which is page 33 of the Supplementary Estimates. I am not sure what page it is in the Main Estimates.

I am wondering if the minister could assist the committee in going through the expenditures and perhaps providing a bit more detail, if he has any, beginning under Urban Capital Projects Allocation I, a total of \$90 million for Capital Commitments, if he could give an explanation of some of these.

Mr. Ernst: Under the \$90 million fund, that was the capital project allocation that was made between 1985 and 1990. Most of that has been delivered, although there are some commitments under that program that still remain outstanding. I guess the biggest one would be the York-St. Mary extension through The Forks for \$8 million, which, I believe, is the amount. Although I am going from memory, and so I stand to be corrected, I believe it is about \$8 million. There may be one or two others that are not quite completed or whatever. That one is pretty much over with.

In terms of Urban Capital Projects Allocation II, that was divided into three basic categories. It is \$96 million altogether. Thirty million dollars was to be for city priorities. The city could spend it on whatever it wished, no strings attached, so to speak.

The second component of that was \$40 million. That was to be spent on infrastructure renewal. We felt it was a high priority item that should be addressed. Therefore, the strings attached were that they had to spend it on infrastructure renewal.

The last component, \$26 million, and the smallest component, was on joint projects between the province and the city where the province viewed that it had an interest.

I can tell you basically, I think—if you can just grant me a moment here.

If I could ask the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray), are you looking for something that is particular? I can go through reams and reams of paper and give you '91, '92, '93 and our projections to the end of the agreement, if you like. If you have

some specific issues, I can try and answer those, or I can give you the whole nine yards, as you wish.

Ms. Gray: In response to the question, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, if the minister has written information that he would be prepared to table for us for our information—that would be one question.

Mr. Ernst: I recently wrote the mayor outlining the balance of the \$26 million commitment. The others are at the city's choice, and they are block funding, so I cannot tell you very much about those other than what they might have spent them on after the fact.

The \$26 million, I can give you some indication of that. I am not sure whether I have that letter. If I do not have it with me, I can undertake to get you a copy at a later time. Just give me a sec. here to see if I do have a copy of that letter. As a matter of fact, I do have it. This is the copy that was tabled by the Leader of the Opposition in the House. It is the same letter and the information is the same. Basically what it is, is our \$26 million under the urban projects capital location is being spent on a detoxification centre for the Main Street Project, \$150,000; \$150,000 for a downtown weather-protected pedestrian system; \$105,000 for a nitrification study, phase two. It is a waste water treatment. I can go in to the details if you like.

A transportation study, \$154,000; \$2.268 million towards the reconstruction of St. Anne's Road twinning from Sterling Avenue to Novavista Drive that will ultimately lead to a connection to the Perimeter Highway, which is the provincial interest; the La Salle River bridge which is part of our commitment on Pembina Highway reconstruction within the city of Winnipeg south of the Perimeter Highway. It is part of the Highway 75 twinning program; \$1.788 million for the reconstruction of Kenaston Boulevard from Wilkes Avenue to McGillivray Boulevard four-laning; contribution of \$1.348 million towards the paving of Wilkes Avenue between Fairmont Road and the Perimeter Highway, completion of a project started in 1989, and it connects the Perimeter Highway with Kenaston Boulevard.

* (2100)

Brookside Boulevard \$4.58 million, the construction of the four-lane portion between Inkster Boulevard and the overpass that was constructed by the province in 1991; Charleswood bridge \$13 million—fairly obvious. Core Area

Initiative land, we have an outstanding provision of \$465,000 for balance of expropriated lands under the Core Area Initiative other than the monies held in trust. There is an unallocated portion of \$744,800. So that makes up \$26 million.

Ms. Gray: I thank the minister for that.

I am wondering in regard to the \$154,000 for the transportation study, what particular study would that be?

Mr. Ernst: The City of Winnipeg is looking into a fairly broad study of its transportation needs for the next period of time. They have currently proposal calls out for consultants to deal with that study, and it is to look at all kinds of transportation within the city transit, private automobile, trucking, movement of goods, you know, a broad spectrum of analysis. If you are looking to see it addressing certain neighbourhood traffic problems, I do not think that is the intent. That is quite a different matter, and apparently you are dealing with that in a different way. This is the overall kind of transportation system for the city.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Ms. Gray: That transportation study, is part of that looking at the viability of a southwest transportation corridor, or is the study that specific?

Mr. Ernst: Oh, very likely that will be part of it. That has been around since I started in politics 20 years ago at City Hall, so no doubt it will raise its head again. The question, I do not think at any point, is that it is not a good idea; it is a question of how can you fund it. It is significantly expensive. The last time I heard it was somewhere around, upwards of \$75 million or \$80 million using just the bus option, not light rail transit. If you are looking at the LRT, it is probably about two or three times that.

Ms. Gray: The Charleswood bridge allocation, the \$13 million, this is under the section of Provincial-City Priorities. I was under the impression—I could be wrong—that the Charleswood bridge is not a city priority.

Mr. Ernst: I think you are wrong.

Ms. Gray: Is the minister indicating then that the City of Winnipeg does feel that the Charleswood bridge is a priority, and it is something they are going to be constructing within the next few years?

Mr. Ernst: It is my understanding that money for a design and the property acquisition were contained in prior years' and this year's budget, the capital

budget for the City of Winnipeg, and that they intend to proceed with full-budget allocation for construction in 1994.

Ms. Gray: If the city already has decided, or should the city decide for whatever reason, particularly if they complete a study to look at transportation needs in the city in general, that they have reprioritized and that the Charleswood bridge is not a priority, what impact does that have on the minister's budget allocations here?

Mr. Ernst: I suppose we have to cross that bridge when we come to it. There are no time constraints or years indicated on this commitment. It is a commitment under the agreement, and they have until whatever the latest time is to claim under the agreement to claim for this project, so they have lots of time to deal with it.

I could suggest that one or two or three years, in one way or another, it is probably not going to affect it materially.

Ms. Gray: The reason I asked that question is I know some of the councillors, and I think the mayor as well, are particularly concerned about the entire transportation system, or lack thereof, in the southwest part of the city. I know, certainly with the development in Whyte Ridge and Linden Woods and in the south part of the city that really, as a city, we have not built adequate transportation systems to accommodate that development, which is why—and I am pleased that there are at least some dollars going into some repair of Kenaston, although \$1.78 million is probably not a lot of dollars considering what may need to be done.

I am sure the minister is aware of the transportation study that is going on in the Crescentwood-River Heights area which is looking at traffic flows, et cetera, and the problems that people in that area are experiencing because of through traffic, or the perception of through traffic, going through River Heights and Crescentwood. That is why I asked about the \$13 million allocated to the Charleswood bridge.

Basically, my real question to the minister would be, what type of leadership can the minister take or has the minister taken in encouraging the city that, before they look at any future development, that part of any type of development, residential development or even commercial, but particularly residential, can only be developed and planned along with looking at transportation systems, which

I would suggest the city has not done a good job of in the last number of years.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, historically, we have had all kinds of great plans for transportation routes in the city of Winnipeg. The best transportation plan that was ever produced, probably in the history of North American planning, was the WATS study produced in 1968 for Metro.

That plan is as relevant today as it was in 1968. The problem is that the NDP government took over in 1969, and the Highways minister of the day, Joe Borowski, said there will be no major routes of transportation in the city of Winnipeg, no freeways, nothing of that type at all. This was bad stuff, according to the people of the day, and that plan was thrown out, abandoned, junked, and there was nothing left of that plan.

Notwithstanding that, the city has tried from time to time to build bits and pieces of that to try and utilize some of the benefits that were predicted from that plan, and have been more or less, more successful or less successful, in many cases, with respect to that.

* (2110)

But the fact of the matter is that the overall transportation plan at that time was one that should have been implemented and should have been implemented then, in advance of a lot of the residential development that has occurred since, because once you build the residential development you can never build the highways after because the people who are there now do not want to have the noise, do not want to have the problems associated with it.

When you build a road in advance to that development, then the people know. When they get there, they know that is going to be there and that is going to be either a benefit or a problem for them, as the case may be. But at least it is there and they know, and it is not coming along after the fact.

It is no longer any good just to retain the right-of-way. We have got all kinds of right-of-way all over Winnipeg that will never be used because of its close proximity to residential development.

So I am hopeful that this transportation plan, as it deals with the future, will look at not only just putting it on paper but look at the implementation process as well, how it should be implemented, when it should be implemented, how it should be funded

and a number of those issues, because otherwise, you are simply creating once more a very nice document that will gather a lot of dust and will not ever see the light of day.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to ask the minister about the Marwest contract that he promised a couple of weeks ago, and I am wanting to know when that is going to be given to us.

Mr. Ernst: When we were dealing with the Annual Report of The Forks Corporation, the member asked if The Forks Corporation would provide a copy of the lease agreement they had with Marwest. I have not heard back from them yet, so I will inquire.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the minister tell us when the committee will be meeting again to consider North Portage?

Mr. Ernst: That will be at the direction of the House leader.

Mr. Maloway: What the minister is telling me is that he does not know when the committee will meet, if it will meet, even.

Mr. Ernst: I am not the House leader. House leaders of all three parties, and the member knows that, determine these things from time to time, so we will have to see what the House leader has organized.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, well, I detect a bit of reluctance on the part of the minister and the people from The Forks Corporation to provide the information. I know we have a lot of questions that we want to ask about the North Portage report and the North Portage development. I was concerned that perhaps the House leader might not call the committee, but perhaps we will have to be dealing with that at a later time.

I wanted to ask a question about the Dutch Elm Disease Program and so on. The minister has had this program brought into his purview from the Natural Resources department. Now, what is currently happening with that program?

Mr. Ernst: What is happening is that we are spending twice as much money on it this year as we did last year. As a matter of fact, I have not had a single question from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) on the question of Dutch elm disease since we put \$700,000 in our budget for that purpose. In fact, what we are doing in concert with

the city is—and I think there was a major article yesterday in the paper dealing with that whole issue of dealing with sanitation of elm trees.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased there is \$700,000 that is going into the Dutch Elm Disease Program. It is a very important program, and I am pleased to see the dollars being spent in that area. It took a lot of lobbying on the part of a lot of people, but the point is, the money is there and it will be used to good purpose.

I was wondering, since the change in the City of Winnipeg's boundaries with respect to the number of councillors, et cetera, and I know that a lot of the concerns or issues would go directly to city councillors or to City Hall, but has there been any feedback, at the minister's level or his department, from taxpayers in Winnipeg about the changes in the boundaries and the redistribution of the number of city councillors, et cetera?

Mr. Ernst: Initially, when the proposal was announced, the reactions at the size of council—I think it represented probably at least two-thirds of the people of Winnipeg—were in favour of that initiative.

Since the election of 1992, and the fact of the matter is that there are now 15 councillors in operation at the City of Winnipeg, I have heard virtually nothing, no complaints at all.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, earlier on there were comments made about the efficiency of the Department of Urban Affairs. In some of the other departments that I have been in, I have asked about any type of reviews, explanations or discussions ongoing about restructuring of various departments.

I am wondering if the minister could indicate if the Department of Urban Affairs, if his department has looked at that not necessarily with the view of amalgamating with other departments. It could be sections of other departments amalgamating with Urban Affairs. So I am wondering if the minister could comment on that.

Mr. Ernst: I can say that, both from the perspective of minister of this department and the Department of Housing and from my role on Treasury Board for the past five or six years, we have looked at restructuring and reorganizing a number of departments in the government.

I do not think any are immune from that analysis and that ongoing review of their function. It has

been a fact of life, given the kind of fiscal constraints that we are under, that it has really forced a lot of reorganization, trying to do things better, trying to do them smarter, trying to do them for less money than we did them in the past, and has prompted an awful lot of creative work on behalf of the staff in those departments and on behalf of ministers of the government in attempting to deliver as much programming as possible with the dollars available.

In that sense, yes, we are, and have been for the past number of years, continuously analyzing the operations of our departments.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, with the continual analysis of the department, any suggestions and recommendations for potential changes in the departmental structure that the minister would be prepared to share with this committee?

Mr. Ernst: The answers to those two questions are yes and no. That was slightly facetious. Yes, we are looking at some things at the present time, and I am not really at liberty yet to discuss those with members of the committee. They are not far enough down the line yet to warrant that.

Ms. Gray: In regard to The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act where we were sitting in committee the other day and had discussions surrounding the potential of giving authority to the City of Winnipeg in regard to charging library fees, can the minister perhaps indicate if he feels that the City of Winnipeg should have the authority to make those decisions and be held accountable to the taxpayers for those decisions?

* (2120)

Mr. Ernst: It was determined by the committee that they ought not, and you and I and the other members of the committee unanimously supported that position, did not vote against it. There was no recorded vote, so that the motion passed unanimously, and that issue has been dealt with.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know what the committee did, but I am wondering what the minister's opinion is on the question in regard to authority to the City of Winnipeg to make those decisions.

Mr. Ernst: I expressed my position on Friday.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to expand a little bit on the member for Crescentwood's question about the reduction in the size of

City Council. It seems to me, and we said this would occur last year, was that when you would reduce the size of City Council to 29 or whatever, that the costs—there would be no administrative savings in cost, because what would happen is, when these people took their seats, they would find ways to spend more money on assistants and stuff like that.

That is, in fact, what we have seen happen here, that the councillors have now surrounded themselves with offices, expenses and salaries for staff and stuff like that. Is the minister aware of whether there is, in fact, any cost saving or whether this 29-person council is even more expensive than the previous one?

Mr. Ernst: The council, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is 15, not 29.

I think at the time, I clearly indicated that it was never my expectation that there would be specific line savings from salaries, for instance; that taking the salaries of 29 councillors, and then comparing that to the salaries of 15 councillors, there would be any, materially, net saving. In fact, I said on a number of occasions, I did not think there would be, and I said that publicly. I think that, if you check with your critic of the day, she will, in fact, agree that that was my position.

The expectations were that, ultimately, in the overall operations of the city, that 15 councillors making decisions on its operations would be more efficient and be able to deal with it on a more efficient basis. Whether that is the case or not, we all read the budget machinations that went on in the news media over a protracted period of time when the city was trying to reach its operating budget—whether that is more or less efficient, or whether they spent more or less money than they would have if there were 29 councillors, your guess is as good as mine. I still hold great expectations that they will, ultimately, be more efficient.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I thought I had said 15-person council, but there was so much noise over here to my right that I could not hear myself at the time.

I think that ends the questioning that I have. Unless the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) has any more, I guess we could pass the Minister's Salary and the department.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$10,300—pass.

Resolution 20.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$481,200 for Urban Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute break before we move on to Northern Affairs? Five minutes.

The committee recessed at 9:26 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 9:32 p.m.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This evening, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs.

Does the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs have an opening statement?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Yes, I do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson and members of the committee, I am pleased to introduce the Estimates for the 1993-94 fiscal year for the Department of Northern and Native Affairs.

As Minister of Northern Affairs and of Native Affairs, it has been a distinct pleasure to play an active role in the development of new initiatives for northern and native communities over the past year. Through the dedicated efforts of staff and the department and the Native Affairs Secretariat, we have taken steps to implement a number of proactive initiatives to promote sustainable development of the North.

In addition, we are accomplishing our goals to resolve outstanding issues and focusing on attention on enhancing the quality of life enjoyed by people who live and work in our northern and native communities.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the credit for our accomplishments over the past year goes not only to the staff and the department but also to the northern residents and aboriginal peoples who are working with us in partnership to target and achieve our goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and commendations to the many Manitobans whose outstanding contributions, support and participation have helped to create a positive climate for growth and change that will benefit all Manitobans.

Through our government's partnership approach, we are working to ensure that northern residents and aboriginal people have a greater voice in the institutions that serve them and greater administrative control over specific programs.

It is not our job as a government to make arbitrary decisions about what we think Manitobans want or need; rather, it is our responsibility to consult with a broad range of men and women from Manitoba's northern and native communities.

We must listen carefully to their concerns and their suggestions on what we can do as a team to provide responsive programs and services to meet those needs. We have made a strong commitment to do this, and, as a result, we are seeing the successful creation, development and completion of a number of initiatives.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, our efforts to ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of Manitoba's North include establishing goals that address all aspects of northern life. We need to promote sustainable economic development and create new jobs through diversification and growth. We must examine ways to preserve the natural beauty of the North while tapping into the many resources that abound in the region.

It is equally important to develop programs and local services that will enhance and improve the quality of life for Manitoba's northern and native residents.

Finally, we must address and resolve outstanding issues through co-operation and consultation. I am pleased to note that we are doing all these things and then some. Laying a solid foundation for the future, through sustainable development must include targeting areas for economic development and diversification, as well as improvements to local infrastructure.

The bottom line is that, although we continue to face difficult economic times, there are opportunities to boost our northern economy to create more jobs and long-term prosperity. This is what we need to keep Manitobans and their children living and working in the North. Part of our

department's efforts to target areas for economic development includes our ongoing effort to promote consultation and a united vision for the future through the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission.

The commission had a productive year, and has completed its consultation with Manitobans. The success of the commission is based on the support of the many northern Manitoba residents who are eager to share their ideas about the direction for the North. The commission is now working to complete its final report, and I look forward to its release in the next few weeks. In fact, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, these notes were written a few days ago; the commission has, in fact, provided the final report to me, and, as I indicated, will be released to the public in the next few weeks.

The department is also embarking on a number of new initiatives to support northern residents and encourage entrepreneurial enterprise. We are currently finalizing the transition of one Crown corporation, Moose Lake Loggers, to private ownership of the community. We anticipate this transfer will ensure greater control is in the hands of the local experts who know best what the demands of the region are. Our department is also providing technical assistance to people in northern Manitoba who are interested in establishing new business ventures. This assistance includes consultation, funding arrangements and development of business plans.

As I mentioned, infrastructure development is also an important aspect of long-term sustainable growth. With improvements to infrastructure, communities are in a better position to propose new business or industry ventures for their local area. One of the major initiatives to provide infrastructure that is conducive to economic growth and improves the quality of life in remote areas is our North Central Hydro line initiative. Native Affairs took on a leadership role in the negotiations with Canada and Manitoba Hydro and the discussions with the native communities affected by this project. As many of you know, we have signed a formal agreement, and our steps over the past year involved establishing the environmental review panel and communication links with the communities. Our next steps will be to examine the reports from the environmental review. Subject to those reports and following final approval by Canada and Manitoba, we will be in a position to

implement the first stages of this project in the 1993-94 fiscal year.

In the interest of maximizing resources by doing more with less and making effective use of services already in place, our department has introduced three initiatives for construction and maintenance of infrastructure. We are dedicating \$3.9 million over one and a half years to support the infrastructure programs in northern communities. This capital program will provide lead time to communities in remote northern areas with a considerably shorter construction season. The benefits of this lead time include extra time for staff and communities to plan prior to the construction season. They will be able to co-ordinate service delivery by other agencies, tender projects and acquire necessary approvals for funding, subdivisions and environmental guidelines well ahead of the construction date. This lead time also enables communities to arrange for material and storage, choose a site and prepare all drawings and specifications so that they are ready to start as soon as the construction season begins. The cost-savings benefit and efficient use of staff hours make this capital program an excellent use of resources, and we are getting better value for our investment.

Another way to reduce cost is to prolong the life of the infrastructure through preventative maintenance. Our department is continuing to allocate significant resources to provide maintenance that will extend the life span of provincially owned infrastructure, some \$96 million in our 56 Northern Affairs communities. This is being accomplished by investing time and money towards a public works program in each community. We are providing training in a preventative maintenance system, and we have introduced a system in 28 communities that provides direction and guidance for maintaining the physical facilities.

* (2140)

Not only does the maintenance training ensure hands-on experience at a local level to keep infrastructure in good running condition, it also ensures careful safety measures are met and reduces the risk of injuries in the public works area. While training is being maintained in some areas, department staff have highlighted other areas where the department could make better use of

limited resources by providing procedural manuals in place of training sessions.

There are a number of manuals which have been or are in the process of being revised this year. Those include instruction manuals for preparing local budgets, following Local Government Development policies and hiring and supervision policies. There is also a clerk reference manual, a mayor and councillor manual and a fire program booklet.

We have also introduced an initiative to assist local contractors. In the past, bonding companies were reluctant to provide bonding to contractors on small water and sewer projects of up to \$150,000. This prohibited small local contractors from undertaking projects they would otherwise be capable of handling.

In order to provide these local businesses with opportunities to bid on small projects, the Department of Northern Affairs will now accept an irrevocable letter of credit in lieu of performance and materials bond, again a move that was taken at the request of the industry to assist smaller local operators in our northern and remote communities.

Another initiative in progress is the establishment of new gaming agreements through the Indian Gaming Commission policy of the Manitoba government. In 1990, our government introduced a new policy to address jurisdictional disputes between the Manitoba government and Indian reserves under the control of the gaming activities on reserves.

In 1992-93, we successfully negotiated Indian Gaming Commission agreements with seven First Nations, namely: Sandy Bay, Mathias Colomb, Nelson House, Crane River, Moose Lake, Fox Lake and Birdtail Sioux. There are currently 20 First Nations operating under the authority of their own gaming commissions. The department also developed a policy with respect to video lottery terminals, and several First Nations negotiated agreements with the province based on this policy.

These programs and agreements are integral to the sustainable development and long-term growth of new enterprise in the North and in our native communities. I remain committed to promoting these programs, and I am proud of the contributions my staff has made in these areas.

We are equally committed to improving the quality of life enjoyed by northern and native

residents. This includes meeting needs that go beyond employment, such as healthy environment and opportunities for recreation activities for all ages.

The protection of our environment has become interwoven with any new development, whether it is for infrastructure, improvements or economic expansion. Hence, the creation of sustainable development principles. The Department of Northern and Native Affairs strongly supports the concept of sustainable development in any new endeavour. Furthermore, we have made a strong commitment to protect our environment with particular emphasis on water quality, sewage disposal and the reduction of solid waste in our northern communities.

A study was carried out by the department to evaluate potable water and sewage disposal in all 56 Northern Affairs communities. Based on these studies, our department will begin upgrading a number of water and sewage disposal systems in our northern communities.

We are also exploring the possibility of developing joint facilities for water and sewage management to be shared by neighbouring communities as well as consolidation of waste disposal sites.

The Department of Northern Affairs is working in partnership with the Department of Environment to support a water management program involving 15 modules for water operators in northern communities. Through this program, 20 water operators have completed the 130-hour course to receive their certificate in water management.

Our department will continue to support this training program and staff are encouraging water operators to acquire their certificates. While I am on the topic of specialized training, I would like to acknowledge and commend the 14 recreation directors who graduated from our pilot program last August and the four participants who received a certificate of achievement. These individuals provide recreational services to our Northern Affairs communities and northern reserves.

The northern Recreation Directors' Program was introduced in October of 1990 to address concerns raised by our northern community leaders. They felt young people had too much idle time on their hands and would greatly benefit from organized, recreational activities. I want to acknowledge the

work that was carried out as well by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and my honourable colleague who was involved as well in the pilot project.

We have received a very positive response from the many young people who are participating in the recreation programs in their areas. Our department is very pleased with the great success of this program, and we are reviewing the allocation of funds to continue the recreation director initiative as an ongoing program.

Programs such as this provide a healthy outlet for young people. They also promote cross cultural awareness because sports and other activities transcend cultural boundaries and create a team spirit. In this way, recreation programs leave a lasting impression and are a valuable tool in promoting youth involvement in the community for both personal and professional development.

The success of the recreation programs in the North prompted by my departmental staff to explore other opportunities to get young people involved in fun activities that will teach them interpersonal skills.

We are pleased to provide increased funding this year to support the Northern Fly-in Sports Camps program to enable instructors to bring the popular sports camps to some of Manitoba's northern and remote communities.

In 1992, more than 500 children—I think this is extremely important—from northern communities participated in this program which teaches young people leadership skills and improves their self-esteem through social and recreational activities.

We believe strongly that programs like this greatly enhance the quality of life in our northern and native communities. We are also working to provide support services for aboriginal people in our province. We are now halfway through the year dedicated to indigenous people around the world.

I believe Manitobans share a desire to preserve and promote the unique culture and heritage of our province's first people. We must also work to resolve outstanding issues through consultation and implement new policies and programs that support the aboriginal people and meet their needs.

Over the past year we have achieved a number of important goals to recognize and address

concerns expressed by aboriginal people in our province. Our government introduced Canada's first aboriginal women's policy to ensure Manitoba's aboriginal women have a venue to voice their concerns, carried out by my colleague the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson). The policy is called Speaking to the Future, and it was developed through extensive consultation with aboriginal women in Manitoba.

The Native Affairs Secretariat does an excellent job of meeting with and assisting aboriginal groups throughout the province. The secretariat also assisted the Kekinan Aboriginal Seniors group in planning for the operation of Phase 1 of the Kekinan Centre which consists of seniors' rental housing. My colleague the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) played a very important role as Minister of Housing and continues to do so as Minister responsible for Seniors.

In addition, the secretariat helped Kekinan to complete an updated needs assessment of the aboriginal seniors in Winnipeg. Open communication and mutual understanding are integral in any joint initiatives, and I am proud of the proactive role the staff are playing to promote this kind of communication. They have helped to create an atmosphere that is conducive to harmony and co-operation in our province. This has certainly benefited the ongoing Metis tripartite negotiations as well.

The tripartite technical group have made progress in several areas. In housing, a property management initiative has been developed and is being implemented on a phased-in basis. In education, there is a concept paper, and I compliment my colleague the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) who has taken the leadership role in this area. Education has developed a concept paper and proposal which have been developed on the Louis Riel Institute and are now being considered by both the provincial and federal governments.

Open communication links have also played an important part in resolving a number of outstanding issues. In particular, we have participated in negotiations with 26 Indian bands and the federal government regarding settlement of outstanding treaty land entitlements. I anticipate we will reach settlements with several bands in the upcoming year.

* (2150)

We have also been actively pursuing settlements for compensation claims related to hydro development projects. I am pleased to say we have made significant progress in completing settlements with Grand Rapids, The Pas Indian band, Easterville, Moose Lake and Cormorant to compensate them for damages resulting from hydro development in the 1960s.

We have also made substantial progress in resolving claims settlements under the Northern Flood Agreement. In the past year our government signed a comprehensive agreement with the Split Lake Cree First Nation to fully and finally settle Manitoba's obligations under the Northern Flood Agreement.

I was further delighted to join the federal government and Manitoba Hydro in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Nelson House First Nation. By signing this agreement, all four parties made a formal commitment to begin intensive, determined negotiations to develop a comprehensive agreement to be completed by the fall of this year.

Last week, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with York Factory First Nation. This Memorandum of Understanding will enable negotiations to proceed toward reaching comprehensive settlement agreement. We will also continue to negotiate on a claim-by-claim basis with Norway House First Nation and Cross Lake First Nation, but at the same time we will continue to promote final and comprehensive settlements as the most effective means of resolving this long-term outstanding issue.

These types of agreements help to ensure local bands have a greater control over local affairs. I believe it is important for local communities to have control over decision making that affects their communities, because they are most aware of their needs and can target their goals for the future. I am sure we all agree that having control over our own destiny is an important aspect of planning for the future.

Increased independence in the North can be achieved through incorporation and block-funding arrangements. A printed guideline on the process of incorporation is now being shared with all communities under the jurisdiction of The Northern

Affairs Act. This was accomplished in May of 1992.

As the word about incorporation and its many positive benefits spreads, there is an increasing number of communities who are inquiring about their options under this initiative. There is also increased interest in the potential for greater local autonomy through our block-funding arrangements.

In keeping with the objective of the Local Government Development Division to progressively transfer authority, funds, resources and responsibility to councils and committees, six additional communities have shown interest in entering block-funding arrangements.

With these programs and initiatives, the Department of Northern and Native Affairs is working to promote partnerships with northern and aboriginal people and to improve and enhance the quality of life for the northern and native communities we represent.

We will continue to foster new communication links in the upcoming year, and I anticipate we will witness a number of progressive and exciting achievements in 1993-94.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, members of this committee, this concludes my opening remarks for 1993 Expenditure Estimates for the department.

In closing, I want to acknowledge and thank the citizens of Wabowden and the city of Thompson in the recent evacuation that took place with the forest fire activities.

I am pleased with the way in which it was handled, all the departments that were involved, but particularly acknowledge those individuals in whose home lives and community the disruptions took place. They moved very co-operatively, and the community of Thompson, of course, opened their doors and their services one other time when we faced the forest fire devastation of a few years ago. Again, I want to acknowledge and thank the support of those communities.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, those are my opening remarks.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), have an opening comment?

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Yes, I do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Listening to the comments of the minister, I am very surprised there is no one in northern Manitoba that is without a job. From the remarks I just heard, they are doing a lot of wonderful things for every community and every aboriginal person that is up there; but, sad to say, the trips I have taken, and some of the people that I have spoken to, there are a lot of people out of work in northern Manitoba.

There has been some good work done; I will grant that to the minister. He has tried to accomplish some things, like the 14 recreation workers that he mentioned. Yes, it is very important that we have adequate recreation programs for northerners, especially for the kids when they are out of school, because right now in the North, and you hear it from northern leaders over and over, there is a real serious problem with solvent abuse.

This is one area that will help alleviate that problem, because children will be more active and more involved and idle minds, hopefully, will not turn to abuse.

The other thing that the minister did was gave \$50,000 towards a contribution to the northern fly-in camp. The Northern Fly-In Sports Camp has been ongoing for quite a few years. It is a wonderful program, and it has benefitted a lot of the communities. It does train a lot of the northerners, gives them a lot of leadership skills and works very closely with the communities. I hope those kinds of programs will continue getting the support of this government and the minister.

The other positive events that have taken place are the settlements of some of the Hydro agreements. The only problem I have with that is, when we were in negotiation stages and environmental assessment hearings on Conawapa, one of the things I was hoping to hear from that was the past damages to all of the North, and I think that was one of the areas that the environmental assessment hearings was going to be addressing, from my understanding. If that was the case, I wish the minister would have continued on and finished that assessment, instead of stopping halfway through.

On the negative side, there are quite a few. One of the big things that I heard the minister speaking about was team, team, team, teamwork, co-operation with the community, northern communities, co-operation with the community leaders and working closely with the community leaders, and I was very surprised when I saw some of the cuts to our leadership that represents all of the reserves in Manitoba.

I am talking about the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, that got their total funding from the province cut right off. It is just like any other government or any council. You are elected by the people to represent the people, and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was developed by the chiefs to represent the chiefs who represent the community. By losing that voice, I think it is a disgrace to the aboriginal people because that was the voice, hopefully, that was going to some day negotiate aboriginal self-government.

I was surprised that I heard very little from the minister on aboriginal self-government, because that is what the aboriginal people want, that is what the aboriginal leaders are looking forward to. Even in the Estimates, you see under Native Affairs Secretariat, it says right in there, "Provides policy development, research and planning, policy analysis, federal-provincial negotiations, interprovincial negotiations, co-ordination and organizational activity."

Then, when you look further into it, it also has a line where it talks about helping the aboriginal people implement self-government. I was very shocked when I saw some of the cuts that were made, because it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that the success of aboriginal self-government and the key to aboriginal self-government is education. When you see the education measures that have been taken, and trial and error, and you see such successful programs as the ACCESS programs where we have aboriginal doctors, dentists, teachers, social workers, and on and on, who have graduated with the proper support from those programs and who go back into the North, a lot of them into their own home communities to help their own people.

Those are the kinds of programs that are key for aboriginal self-government. Without those programs, it will just be the same old story where you will have nonaboriginal bureaucrats running a system that is supposed to be run by aboriginal

people, and once it fails—which under that system, it would be set up to fail—you will be able to hear the I told you so's. I was very disappointed in that.

* (2200)

The other thing is, a lot of aboriginal people had really high hopes and had a lot of confidence in the minister, and I think that is slowly disappearing. I do not know why, because I hope his heart is in the right place, but when you see the massive, massive cuts directly affecting aboriginal people, I wonder where the minister is around the cabinet table, because a lot of the people whom I have spoken to believed the minister representing them would be the minister who would be standing up for the people whom the minister should be representing as a Minister of Northern and Native Affairs.

When you look at jobs in the North, you can go to almost any community in northern Manitoba. You can take your pick of any community, and there is such a high rate of unemployment right now. I know the economy is bad, but if there is some way of addressing that real shortage of jobs, when we had the potential, even in the community of Churchill, for jobs under the spaceport program. I think they are still waiting for their \$70,000 that was promised by the government, and the commitment that they wanted support from this government to try and access some dollars under Western Diversification, they got lip service, and that was the end of it.

It is a real shame because northern Manitoba has so much potential, and we get so much of our resources from the North, and yet, today, we seem to be given very little back.

When you talk about the remote northern fisherman who are devastated right now—a lot of them are not even putting their nets in the water—most of those are aboriginal people. For some unknown reason, the freight subsidy was cut. Even their auditing service was cut. They are fighting two things, the freight subsidy cut plus the low fish prices they have to battle with.

South Indian Lake is now becoming a great fishing area for whitefish, and it has taken years to build that stock back up. Whitefish has been a source of fishing for a lot of the northern communities, and now, there is talk of lumping whitefish into rough fish. If that measure is taken by this government, lumping whitefish as rough

fish, right off the bat, they lose 29 cents for packaging. So that would be another real impact.

The other area the minister addressed briefly was the recreation programs. Like I mentioned earlier, those recreation programs are positive because they tie directly into the whole problem we have in northern Manitoba to do with solvent abuse.

We have been raising this issue, and we have even organized an information session by various chiefs and committed individuals from northern Manitoba here, right at the Legislative Building. We are bringing petitions forward, we have been raising questions and what we hear is, it is a federal responsibility.

I think, as a Minister of Native Affairs, the minister has to stand up and show his commitment to the aboriginal people and sit down and have a meeting with the aboriginal leaders, because they are not asking this government to go into Cross Lake and build a treatment centre. What they are asking for is assistance in ways of resolving the issue that they have.

One of the areas this government could be doing and the minister could be leading, is to sit down with the northern leaders, Sydney Garrioch, for one, and his committee, and arrange a meeting with the federal government, as long as the provincial government is in support of a treatment centre somewhere in the North; and support the community and the aboriginal people to lobby the federal government to get that established; and also, for the provincial government to look at committing dollars, and that could be done in per diems, because not every solvent abuser we have in northern Manitoba is treaty.

Some of them will be coming from Northern Affairs communities. Others will be coming from other towns. Those could be committed provincial dollars in lieu of per diems for individuals going in there. If they had that kind of a commitment—and even look at helping the community offset some of the operating dollars—but what they want is a meeting with the minister and a meeting with the federal representative and with the health care givers, to try and find something that is workable before we lose more young people to this tragic problem we have in, well, I guess it is all over Manitoba. It not only pertains to the North.

The other area this government could be leading the charge and working in co-operation with native

leaders in the North—and it does not have to come in capital dollars—is if you look at the area of Island Lake and the area pertaining to Bloodvein, Berens River and the whole southeast area and the number of individuals who live in those areas, there is not even one personal care home.

I know past governments have been to blame too, but there is always a chance to start. What it takes is a minister who will meet with the individuals, sit down with those individuals, support them when they go to Ottawa and help in those kinds of ways. Not all help has to come in the form of dollars. If you look at the make-up of Island Lake, there are a lot of communities in there, and what they say is, a lot of our elders, when they need personal care, they are taken out of the community and 99 percent of the time we never see them back home unless they are in a pine box. We do not get a chance to visit with our grandparents, and we never get the chance to seek their wisdom and their advice.

That would be a recommendation I would make to the minister is to look at—and I am not talking about dollars and cents here—but it is to look at setting up a meeting with those chiefs and let them know that the government supports them in their endeavours and will do what is possible if they do not have the money to lobby the federal government to try and arrange for the federal government to at least send someone up and have a good look at some of the serious problems. A lot of the people that are responsible for the delivery of programs and dollars for aboriginal people, a lot of them that make the yesses and the noes, have never stepped foot in a lot of those northern communities and do not know what is really happening.

When you talk about effects that it has on aboriginal people, one of the biggest impacts right now on our elders is sugar diabetes. It is escalating, and it is growing at a much more rapid pace than the nonaboriginal community. They built a home, Dial-A-Life, which is great, and what they are hoping for now is—they already have the office space and they have the facilities ready—if they could put in a couple of dialysis machines. What they are scared of is that, once the dialysis machines are all filled up—and from what I have heard in the past few weeks, that is happening—the last on the list will be first to be transferred out of province. A lot of the aboriginal people are last

on the list, and that is what they are very, very worried about.

When I talk about the comments that the minister made of teamwork, co-operation, those sound nice, and they do make a lot of sense; but it has to be much more than just a commitment that is on paper. Without the confidence and without the support of the aboriginal leadership, not much will really be able to be developed for the community. For instance, I have a copy of a letter here from the First Nations Confederacy, and it is a letter—I was sent a copy and the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) was sent a copy, and the Leaders of both parties were sent copies. It was to our Premier, Gary Filmon.

This is from the chiefs of the First Nations Confederacy, and if anyone figures it is only a letter from one organization, I warn you that this organization, the First Nations Confederacy, represents the following First Nations in Manitoba: You have Dauphin River Band, Fairford Band, Lake Manitoba Band, Lake St. Martin Band, Little Saskatchewan Band, Crane River Band, Ebb and Flow Band, Gamblers Band, Keesekoowenin Band, Pine Creek Band, Rolling River Band, Waterhen Band, Sagkeeng First Nation, Valley River Band, Waywayseecappo Band, with a total population—and it says, in total, the First Nations Confederacy represents 16,308 aboriginal people on and off reserve as well as any aboriginal seeking assistance in our Winnipeg office.

* (2210)

In this letter it states: The chiefs of the First Nations Confederacy are appalled by your lack of support for the aboriginal peoples of Manitoba. Your cuts to the budgets of aboriginal organizations are a direct blow to aboriginal self-government. We are astounded that aboriginal organizations should be targeted for funding cuts during the year the United Nations has declared the Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Possibly, this lack of finesse results from a lack of information on your part. We suggest that you research information related to the United Nations project for 1993 on the World's Indigenous Peoples. Hopefully, the information will serve to provide a better basis for dealing with aboriginal Manitobans in a more sensitive, positive manner.

It goes on to state, in a letter dated March 15, by the Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs, Mr. Tomasson, who states:

I would also like to point out that individual Manitoba Indian bands now have the opportunity to access new sources of revenue through their agreements with the province on gaming as well as on tobacco and gasoline taxes.

With your recent raids on Manitoba First Nations and seizures of gaming equipment, it is inconceivable that any aboriginal community in Manitoba should ever realize any funding from that avenue, much less enough funds to provide resources to other aboriginal organizations. There are enough statistics readily accessible from both federal and provincial government sources to prove that aboriginal people are the poorest people in Canada. To suggest that aboriginal communities have the resources to fund aboriginal political or service organizations shows a callous disregard for the aboriginal citizens of this province by the Progressive Conservative government of Manitoba.

It goes on to list the communities. It also says: The funding cuts have sent a loud, clear message to Manitoba aboriginals. The Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba does not value aboriginal people. The current government of Manitoba is not committed to assisting its aboriginal people in obtaining their goals and aspirations to live with the same comforts and degree of benefits as the rest of Manitoba. Despite our initial feelings of betrayal, indignation at your treatment, FNC chiefs are still willing to work with you, Mr. Filmon.

That is why I think it is important. I have to restate it. It is so important that the minister arrange meetings with aboriginal leaders and ask and work out solutions. I know the government does not have all the answers. The aboriginal people do not have all the answers, but in co-operation, hopefully, some answers will come about for the betterment of aboriginal people.

I did not bring this forward just to be negative. I brought it forward because it is very important to aboriginal peoples, and I think it is very important to this government that they look at some of the negative cuts and some of the negative results that happened from the last budget. I do not know how well thought out it was, but when you look at cuts to

all the various organizations that affect directly the aboriginal people it is not very positive.

When you look at the friendship centres, right across Manitoba—it took them years and years to develop the friendship centres to where they are today. They help all aboriginal people, whether they are treaty, non-Status, Inuit, Metis. They work with all aboriginal peoples, and they provide such valuable service. They also do provide a lot of services to our elders.

I hope the government, in its wisdom, will look at some of the cuts and, hopefully, find some ways of reinstating some of those measures, because when you look at another article from the Winnipeg Free Press—and I am sure this was not written by an aboriginal person.

The letter from the chiefs, that is an aboriginal letter, but this article that was written by a reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press. I will just read parts of it.

Statistics released last week show that for a variety of reasons Winnipeg's native population has grown from 28,320 in 1986 to 44,970 in 1991. It says, there are two explanations. More young natives are leaving the poverty-stricken reserves of northern Manitoba where unemployment is often more than 90 percent.

If anybody in this room could imagine any community in southern Manitoba, or even take Winnipeg, if it was 90 percent unemployment, what would the mayors and councils and those community leaders be saying? They would be up in arms.

Yet the aboriginal communities have to live with that year in and year out, and they are trying to overcome it, but it is such a hard battle that they need to work co-operatively with both levels of governments.

It also talks about some of the programs that have been cut, and it says, what has been the government's response?—terminating the Student Social Allowances Program, cutting off provincial funding for Indian and Metis friendship centres, many of which ease the transition from the reserves to the city.

Then it goes on and talks about, where is the urban-aboriginal strategy? I think that is one area that I would like to address, in a short time, is the whole urban aboriginal strategy that we have been hearing about since I was elected.

I do not know how much money has been spent. I do not know where it is at, but I hope when that urban-aboriginal strategy is developed it will be in conjunction with aboriginal people, hopefully, between the aboriginal community and the government, that some answers could be found.

It is not all doom and gloom, but the aboriginal communities are getting very tired and they need help. You heard that letter from the First Nations Confederacy. They are willing to work with the government, they are willing to work closely with the government and they are willing to work co-operatively with the government.

I think it is the responsibility of the minister to initiate contact with the aboriginal leaders and start getting some of these decisions that were made in the last budgets reversed, and work in co-operation to try and get some positive training programs and job opportunities for northern people.

With that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, those are my initial remarks.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

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

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, no, I do not have any opening statements. I prefer to get into questions, but I thought that the member for Point Douglas's (Mr. Hickers) comments were very well spoken.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic from the second opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer the consideration of this item and now proceed with the consideration of the next line.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce his staff present.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have David Tomasson, who is the Deputy Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, and also Rene Gagnon, who is the Director of Administration, whose office is in Thompson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$462,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$139,800—pass.

1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries \$435,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$101,500—pass.

Item 2. Local Government Development (a) Programs and Operational Support (1) Salaries \$265,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$93,600—pass; (3) Community Operations \$4,454,800—pass; (4) Emergency Response Program \$48,600—pass; (5) Community Training \$46,000—pass; (6) Regional Services \$692,300—pass; (7) Grants \$258,900—pass; (8) Recreation Directors' Program \$317,700—pass.

2.(b) Thompson Region (1) Salaries \$375,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$155,800—pass.

2.(c) The Pas Region (1) Salaries \$207,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$100,100—pass.

2.(d) Dauphin Region (1) Salaries \$330,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$108,700—pass.

* (2220)

2.(e) Selkirk Region (1) Salaries \$386,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$154,000—pass.

2.(f) Technical Services (1) Salaries \$355,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$105,700—pass.

2.(g) Audit Services (1) Salaries \$159,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$31,000—pass.

2.(h) Inter-Regional Services (1) Salaries \$293,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$89,700—pass.

2.(j) Northern Affairs Fund (1) Salaries \$115,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$13,600—pass.

Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,159,900 for Northern Affairs, Local Government Development, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

Item 3. Northern Development and Co-ordination (a) Northern Development (1) Salaries \$305,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$108,400—pass.

3.(b) Northern Flood Agreement (1) Salaries \$98,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$26,000—pass; (3) Northern Flood Program \$2,003,500—pass.

3.(c) Economic Development (1) Salaries \$377,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures

\$133,200—pass; (3) Corporate Projects \$250,000—pass.

3.(d) Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission (1) Salaries zero—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$120,000—pass.

3.(e) Communities Economic Development Fund \$1,643,800—pass.

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,065,900 for Northern Affairs, Northern Development and Co-ordination, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

Item 4. Native Affairs Secretariat (a) Salaries \$404,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$165,700—pass; (c) Aboriginal Development Programs \$772,600—pass.

Resolution 19.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,343,000 for Northern Affairs, Native Affairs Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

Item 5. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Northern Communities \$2,379,600—pass; (b) Community Access and Resource Roads \$235,000—pass.

Resolution 19.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,614,600 for Northern Affairs, Expenditures Related to Capital, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

We are now going to revert back to line 1.(a) Minister's Salary.

Rule 64.(4) states, in part, ". . . such officials of the government as are required by a minister may be admitted to the Legislative Chamber, and shall be permitted to sit at the table placed on the floor of the House in front of the minister, but this rule does not apply during the debate on a minister's salary in the Committee of Supply."

With unanimous consent at the committee, we will allow the minister's staff to remain at the table during debate on his salary. Is there unanimous consent? [agreed]

1.(a) Minister's Salary \$10,300. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Hickeys: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the question I have to the Minister of Native Affairs is the whole urban-aboriginal strategy, as I heard has been ongoing for five years.

(Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

I have heard about it since I have been elected, and we keep getting promised every year that it will come forward. I would just like to ask the minister where he is at with the urban aboriginal strategy.

Mr. Downey: Madam Acting Deputy Chairperson, let me at the outset say to the member, who I believe was genuine in his comments and his criticisms to date at the committee in which we are hearing the Estimates of Northern and Native Affairs, I think, I say this, that it is very much with heartfelt thought that he has made his presentation and, as I said at the outset, genuine in his approach to try and accomplish without an overdose or an overinjection of political—[interjection] Well, I was thinking of a little different word, Conrad—without an overdose of political jazz, okay, barbs. That is appropriate, but I say genuinely, I think it is helpful and it is productive for myself, as the minister, and for the department to hear not just negative sides, but to hear constructive criticism as it relates to the Urban Native Strategy. I guess this is one that there are not any clear answers for, and I would appreciate some of the thoughts that the member may have as it relates to some of the potential policies, some of the things that could be accomplished.

We have approached it on a multilateral basis as it relates to the federal and city governments and the province. We have a lot of people, as he has identified the tremendous growth that we have seen in the city, particularly of aboriginal people moving in out of their communities because—one of the reasons, when you look at some of the communities, particularly where they have not got the same amenities that there are in some of our southern communities, for example, they do not have the same hydroelectric service, and that in itself, I think, would encourage people not to continue to live in some of their communities.

So, for whatever reasons, we have seen a tremendous exodus of our northern native people coming to our urban centres. What that does, of course, is to put pressure on those individuals who move. They certainly in a lot of cases, I am sure, do not find themselves in as a comfortable situation as they should have. Housing becomes a problem. The education certainly becomes a concern, and at the end of the day, a job opportunity. I think that is pretty much critical for those individuals who want

to find a new way of life and find it necessary to move to their communities.

Over the past few years, and I say this genuinely, we have attempted to try and find some of the solutions working with our native people. I have made some reference to some of the services that have been put in place, particularly for some of the seniors, through the Kekinan housing—not enough, I know. We have put in place some of the supports and some smaller amounts of funding for the safe house program for the youth, support programs for the native women's shelter, but there seems to be an increasing number of people that need services and need some assistance.

The member is critical about the fact that we have reduced the support for the native leadership, and I guess I have been somewhat confused over the role that the assembly feel that they would play in the urban setting.

We have not totally eliminated the support for the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, they saw a reduction of some 10 percent like a lot of the other organizations, but we maintained some funding as we maintained some funding for the Indigenous Women, which carry out a lot of work in the city of Winnipeg.

As it relates to where do we go from here, I will look for more input from the Aboriginal Council as I will look for more input from the Indigenous Women. How do we structure ourselves so we can effectively get input, provide services, and where do we get the funding? Well, again, I go back to the comment that I put on the record, and that is we have to look at the federal government, because we have certainly a joint responsibility with a lot of the aboriginal people coming to town that constitutionally we have felt the federal government has a major responsibility for, as it relates to the the city of Winnipeg, certainly have a responsibility with the province.

* (2230)

We have attempted to put together an ongoing group which I think was a little bit ambitious in its requests. That is why I have, quite frankly, taken the route of trying to, through the limited means that we have with our department, some of the programs that we have encouraged to be put in place, and I have mentioned a few of them.

The answers do not come easy, and I look for member's input, like the member for Point Douglas

(Mr. Hickes), as to how he sees the resolve to the problem that these people are facing. I am sure there are a lot of people who are frustrated, who, when they reach the urban settings, find very little opportunity. So I ask him what his thoughts and comments are.

We certainly have not given up, and I believe the answers lie within the native community as well. That is where a lot of the solutions will come from. I respect the member in his judgment. I know he said this a few minutes ago, that you just have not got the unlimited resources, so you have to deal with the limited resources you have.

We do have some monies allocated in the budget for this program. We have monies allocated for the AJI program as well, for which some of the urban native people qualify, so it is a combination of things that have to be done. There is no clear solution.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Acting Deputy Chairperson, in response, before I ask a question, I know that this government has done some good things with Phase I of Kekinan and the aboriginal elders are looking for Phase II. From my discussions with some of the aboriginal community leaders, if there was a meeting set up, especially with the Minister responsible for Native Affairs and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) with the Kekinan board, and discussions took place pertaining to in this given time that there is a shortage of dollars, maybe Phase II is not possible—but if that was explained.

A lot of the problems that are facing aboriginal people today are that there does not seem to be a commitment to work together in co-operation with aboriginal people. Almost every citizen of Manitoba knows the economy is not the greatest, and there is this scarcity of dollars, and I think it would be wise of this government and this minister to meet with those individuals that are looking for advancement in their daily lives. When I talk about Phase II, they are looking at personal care built in to the centre.

If that was explained to the board and a meeting set up—I have met with the board, they are very understanding. I know that they would realize that it, maybe, cannot be built this year or next year, but as long as the commitment is there somewhere down the road when the economy picks up and more dollars are available. Maybe if there is some kind of an agreement with the federal-provincial

cost-shared somewhere down the line, I think it would be beneficial to this government to try and approach it in that manner.

When the minister said, maybe the member from Point Douglas might have some ideas, the minister was on the right track, when he mentioned in co-operation with indigenous women and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. But there are two very important organizations that are missing from his statement and they have to be included—the Winnipeg Tribal Council which had been developed in the city of Winnipeg and is working under the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. They are part of the whole organization.

Also, when you talk about the Urban Aboriginal or the Native Affairs Secretariat, Northern Affairs, we cannot leave out the MMF. They have to be included on any urban aboriginal strategy that is developed in Winnipeg. You need representation from the federal government, the province and the city then.

When we look at urban aboriginal strategy, the reason I raised that is because I thought it was completed or nearly completed, because that is what I was hearing since 1990. But if that is not the case, then what a lot of these shortfalls, badly needed programs and badly needed dollars for training and job opportunities for urban aboriginals in the inner city, maybe there could be an emphasis put to the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) to try and incorporate that into a Core Area, whenever that is developed, because when you talk about Core Area Agreements, it has to include the urban aboriginal people because the highest population of aboriginals in the city of Winnipeg are living in the core area. The highest concentration of aboriginal people are right in the core area.

When you look at a Core Area Agreement, that could easily be tied in with the visible minority population and the aboriginal peoples, because a lot of our issues and a lot of our problems are very similar with the minorities coming from a different country and faced with a lot of the same issues and problems that a lot of the aboriginal people face when they come from remote northern communities and reserves. It is a whole adjustment to bigger centres and the whole adjustment process.

So, in response to the minister, I say in all honesty and with commitment, because I have

been—September 11 will be three years, but I still believe that there is a time and place for politics and there are times and places where we have to work together for the betterment of the citizens of Manitoba.

I have made some comments and, yes, I have been negative in some of my comments to the minister, but I did that because I have travelled extensively in the North. Even in my constituency, there are a lot of aboriginal people. Something has to be done; there has to be hope given somewhere.

When you see such a high increase in statistics pertaining to aboriginal people, when it jumps so high in a couple of years, and if you look at the years where it jumped, two of the biggest reasons for the increase in the numbers of aboriginal people living in the city of Winnipeg are, a lot of them are through reinstatement of their treaty with Bill C-31, and the other one has a lot to do with the newfound pride that the aboriginal people have today.

A lot of times in the past some of the aboriginal people would not admit they were aboriginal, and because of what happened over Meech Lake and what happened over various other processes, there is a lot more pride in being an aboriginal.

A lot of the people, when they filled out the census form, they were not ashamed to put down their aboriginal ancestry, and that is why the numbers have greatly increased. A lot of the people were already here in Winnipeg, but they put down something else. That is the kind of pride we have to make sure our youth continue to have and build on.

A lot of that has been brought about by a newfound respect, a newfound commitment and the understanding of taking advice from our elders, and that is coming more so now—a lot of the cultural awareness programs that are being developed in some of our school systems and a lot of the cultural programs that are now practised by the aboriginal people—so that pride is passed down to children.

* (2240)

That is why you see a higher number of aboriginal people today than you did 10 years ago. At least I think that from my conversations with various people.

Getting back to some of the comments I made, I think it is important that the government work with everyone. There is a part for the Assembly of

Manitoba Chiefs to play, and I really, really think that someone from this government, and I hope it is the minister, will take the lead role, patch up whatever differences there are there and try and work together for the betterment of all Manitobans. Sure, we all hold little grudges here and there, but if we are not big enough to set those aside, I think we will be still butting heads 10 years from now.

I would like to get back to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. The reason I raise that is I wonder how much money has been spent to date on the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

Mr. Downey: Before I answer the numbers, I think it is important that I address a little bit broader range for the member for the reasons for the decisions that were taken as it relates to some of the funding cuts. I can tell you that I do not have any differences with the leadership of the aboriginal community. In fact, I feel we have a good ongoing relationship. I have had productive meetings. Yes, the assembly were not happy with the loss of their \$325,000, but faced with the tough decisions and how we were going to deal with some of the reductions and maintain some of the programs they wanted, that was one of the decisions that was made.

Just let me try to explain to the member why that decision was taken. As it is a political body and they do have, through the federal system, budgets established through the federal government to their individual bands—and I believe there are some 61 bands in Manitoba. If one were to divide the number of bands into the total number of dollars that they received, if each band wanted to say we believe in supporting the Assembly of Chiefs as a spokesgroup for each band, they then could put within their budget an amount of just over \$5,000. So each band to maintain their own political organization in Manitoba would have the ability to fund through their own budgets which are supported by the federal government. Again, that is in contrast to the support that was continued for the aboriginal council in Winnipeg that do not have a budgetary fund available from any other source.

The same applies for the indigenous women, they do not have funding sources of any other capability. So that was the reason behind it, because the Assembly of Chiefs, in fact, do have the ability and do represent legal entities of the 61 bands in Manitoba. The Manitoba Metis Federation do not have additional funding supports

or any other ability to acquire funds as the bands do. That is the reason behind it. It was not an attack on the leadership. It was not an attack on the assembly. It was just a matter of in the decision-making process that we felt, the government felt that the assembly had the ability to get the funding from its individual band sources through budgetary actions whereas the indigenous women did not have, whereas the aboriginal council did not have, nor the Manitoba Metis Federation did not have. That is the reason.

The other thing that we have to point out is that some of the positive moves that have been made by this government as it relates to gaming on reserves, as it relates to some of the taxation policies, gives the individual bands the ability to have additional funds if they want to take some \$5,000 from those additional funds and support the Assembly of Chiefs. When I look at the Chemawawin Band, when I look at the Moose Lake Band, when I look at the Split Lake Band, they have settled substantial agreements with the province which in fact give them access to additional monies which, if they want to support the Assembly of Chiefs, they still have that ability of additional monies to do so.

Just to go back to the urban native issue, I think it is important that we spend some time on it. That is why I have continually stressed the need to resolve some of the outstanding agreements, for example, Split Lake. That is why I am pleased that Nelson House has come forward. That is why I am pleased that York Landing has come forward. That is why I am extremely anxious to see a positive result to Treaty Land Entitlement. We are working aggressively with the Island Lake communities.

Madam Acting Deputy Chair, it is absolutely essential that these long-term agreements that are outstanding get resolved because, until we do, there will be a feeling of an uncompleted or just a breakdown between the native community which are owed by the rest of society, and until that debt is paid, then I think there is every reason for them to feel that there is less than desirable commitments fulfilled.

So I think we are on the same track; if I can judge what I am hearing the member say, I think we are on the same track. We have got to do things with the leadership within those individual bands and communities that give them the resources to create the employment opportunities.

I mean, that is where it will come, and I would like to go back to Split Lake for a minute with the member. There was an outstanding commitment of a resource base. There was an outstanding commitment of major financial resources, something like \$47 million, of which the benefit of that will be now spent in their community, and I see some positive, positive initiatives.

I look at Moose Lake. I see some positive initiatives taking place there. I see the whole mood. The member was kind to me; he did not say there was a lot of criticism.

I think what he said was that there were some concerns as to whether or not I was really standing up for the aboriginal community. I can tell you that when one looks at the amount of monies that I have had made available to the Northern Affairs department through Hydro to settle the claims that have been settled that add up to millions of dollars, if you look at South Indian Lake, if you look at the Chemawawin, at Easterville, if you look at Moose Lake, if you look at the community of Split Lake, I mean, there are a lot of dollars that have gone.

What we anticipate will happen in those communities will be employment creation through their own leadership, through culturally equal opportunities, understanding, whether it is in the resource harvesting, whether it is in the education or training fields, it is a matter of giving them the basic resources to direct their lives with.

The recreation program, I thank the member for his compliments on the recreation program. Again, it is the opportunity to turn young people's lives into productive futures.

I have to say as well that I do not think the member and the government are on opposite sides of the solvent abuse treatment centre that he talks about. We realize that it is the federal government's responsibility.

It is not only federal government, it is not only provincial government, it is a societal responsibility to work towards trying to prevent these young people from falling into the need to use these substances, whether it is gasoline sniffing, whether it is drugs, whether it is alcohol, whatever the product that they are using to forget either about the circumstances that they are in, or they have to find themselves doing this because they have too much idle time on their hands, for whatever reason. We have to work on two fronts. We have to try to

cure those individuals that have fallen into the grip of a solvent abuse, but we also have to work to the preventative side.

I thank the member for his compliments on the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps. Five hundred young northern people with a \$50,000 grant from the province and from other sources—have in fact given the opportunity for 500 of those young people to turn their summer into a productive way of life. I mean it just has to be. When I go to my colleagues for the funds to help those things, I stand up and I stand up strong.

* (2250)

When my colleague the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) and I went forward with the pilot program for the Rec Director Program, it was absolutely clear that we had to work to make sure those funds were not only there for a pilot project but were on a continuing basis.

The member says a meeting with the aboriginal leadership would be important. I will tell you, I am prepared to sit down and meet at any time. I am prepared to try and find resources, both, from federal government sources, if I can do that and help, I am more than pleased to be able to do it, because it is the future of those communities that are hanging on the need for, yes, treatment but as much prevention and job opportunities.

I say that is why I continually am pressing for the north central hydro agreement. The fact we have the agreement in place, we are doing the environmental work, I see two major, up-front benefits: employment opportunities for those young people in those communities for the development of the hydro system but as important is to give them the same hydro service that we have in southern Manitoba, that they can have the amenities that have been developed in other communities, that they do not have to leave their homes—and they are their homes—to come to Winnipeg to find a better way of life. They can get employment, they can get a better lifestyle within their community. I mean, it is a shame.

I know the member is fair in his criticism. He said "future governments" when he said there are things that could have been done. It is a shame that we have had the kinds of hydroelectric power generated in the North and have bypassed those communities that are only a hundred miles away

from one of the biggest generating systems that we have in the world, let alone North America and northern Canada. So, with his support, putting this together, I think, will help. Answers are not immediate, and I want him to acknowledge that. I am not even going to get into a political debate with the member, because I do not think that will accomplish anything at this particular time.

What we need to do, I think, is to lay all our cards on the table and say what can we do. Well, I have told him some of the things that we can do. Let me just elaborate a little bit more about another initiative that I know the member is aware of, and that is the Northern Economic Development Commission.

I want to acknowledge the work of the commissioners. I think they put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to make sure the communities spoke to them. It was not a group of people going out into the communities that set up an intimidating system. They went out and genuinely asked the people to speak to them as to what they saw the future of the North being.

I have the report which has now been presented to me; and, within the next period of time after we have had a time to review it, we will be presenting it publicly. I hope that the member genuinely takes a look at it, gives us some support in areas that we feel we can move on it. It is a pattern. It is recommendations to be taken seriously. That is where we go.

Now I know the member has talked in the past about a Northern Development Agreement, that we do not have one any longer, and, no, we do not. But I hope with this basic blueprint that we have with what I would see as the communities of the North speaking out. It gives us a document of which we can speak to the federal government with.

The other one, and I will get a little political and let him know this just a little bit. I was extremely disappointed, and I say this genuinely, when we were not able to proceed with the Conawapa project and the Bipole III. I think the member opposite was, too, if I might say so. I am not putting words in his mouth, but the indication I got from him that it was a disappointment, that there were a number of jobs, a considerable number of jobs that would have been available to the aboriginal people and northern people, a major investment that would

have assisted tremendously the North and also the suppliers of product from southern communities.

That is where I have to just ask my colleague if he has been able to sort out with his own colleagues where they stand. I mean, if one were to push and try to get this back on the agenda, have the member and his party got it sorted out—this is not political; I am asking genuinely—as to their support? I think if I recall some of the debate that took place previously in the House with my colleague from Point Douglas, I got the impression he was supportive. Yes, do the environmental work, but at the end of the day it was a project worth proceeding with. That in itself is a major economic—would be a major economic boost to our northern communities.

When you add a lot of these things together, I think things will change. They will change for the better. Instant jobs, I cannot promise instant jobs. The member I know would like to see some. I would too, but I think if we can continue to work with the communities, we can certainly see some improvement.

The mining sector, I think there is going to be some positive news breaking loose in the mining sector which will again add to some of the supporting of our northern communities. All in all, it is there and the member is correct, we are going to see a turnaround in the economy. When we do, I think the North is positioned and poised to take full advantage of the resource development opportunities, of the service industry opportunities, of the training and teaching opportunities, the medical profession, all those areas that depend on people for supports will open up to the people of the North.

I say this genuinely, I think that what I am hearing and seeing from the people who have been, very much a part of the development of the North will be there. I hope the job opportunities open up so some of the people who have found themselves with the need to move into the urban settings will find the opportunities to move home to take advantage of some of the opportunities that are created, but it is a time factor which will take a considerable amount of continued building.

I say that there are certain areas I am not happy with. I am not happy with some of the progress in certain areas. I would like to have seen job opportunities and development come about quicker

but to try to force it would not be right either. The communities have to be a major part of the development of it, and that is again why I go back to say, to resolve the outstanding land claims, to resolve the outstanding flood agreements, to resolve a bunch of these traditional areas of dispute are critical.

I would hope the member would continue to be positive in his approach because it is helpful.

* (2300)

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. HICKES: I would just like to say a few things before I ask many questions, is whether the positive development is that whole hydro line going into various communities, which is correct and has been lacking for years and years. It is nothing new. That was under all the various governments that initiative could have been taken place.

When we talk about some of the responsibilities, some of the shortfalls for aboriginal people and especially northern Manitoba, yes, there are some shortfalls that come under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Some are provincial, some are in Northern Affairs communities who come under their mayors and councils and various governments. The whole point, and I cannot stress this enough, is that someone has to take the lead role to pull all the interested parties together, because you are not going to solve anything by one level of government or one individual person. It has to be a joint co-operative effort.

I see no one better than the Minister of Native Affairs taking that lead role to pull the federal government together and the aboriginal leaderships and the provincial government and make sure all the individuals lay the cards on the table and clear the deck and say that this is what we have, this is what we do not have, okay, what can we do co-operatively for the betterment of northerners?

I hope the minister will take that on and initiate some meetings with the northern leadership, federal government and provincial governments. There have been a lot of good things that are happening. Some of them are ongoing negotiations. The Hydro settlements are great. They have been a long time coming. Some agreements will take many more years to come, but as long as the willingness is there and people keep working towards that same goal.

The minister briefly touched on the whole issue of aboriginal gaming with working out agreements with individual bands. One of the things that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was looking at and were hoping to resolve was the whole jurisdiction on gaming, not worrying about agreements for this band, that band and other various bands, because there are 61 bands in Manitoba. Are you going to sign an agreement with every one? Is every community going to be able to raise enough funds from their community? You look at Shamattawa, Tadoule Lake. How much funds will they be able to generate for their community?

What they were looking at was a gaming agreement with the province. What they were looking at was jurisdiction for gaming on reserves undertaken by aboriginal leaders. They were looking at setting up what we have here in Winnipeg on McPhillips Street and Regent, I guess is the other one, developing casino operations in various—I do not even know how many, but various reserves, and the funding coming to the organizations to be filtered to all reserves in Manitoba and not just one community that has a bigger population.

If you take Sagkeeng's ability to raise funds and compare it to Shamattawa, you cannot even compare it, because Sagkeeng could raise a lot more money than they ever will in Shamattawa or Tadoule Lake.

What they were looking at was an umbrella system just like we have in Manitoba, where the gaming dollars come to the province and the province allocates to organizations and needy programs. That is what they were looking at—and hiring aboriginal people to work in some of those and using some of that money for some of the poorer communities for economic development opportunities.

That is a whole different issue than just signing agreements with various bands. I know that is what I was told in discussions with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. That is what they were hoping for, was a system set up just like we have in Manitoba.

When you talk about Conawapa, the minister is right. I stated from Day One when I was critic of Manitoba Hydro that I had no problems developing Conawapa, as long as all the requirements were met. I made that very clear at the start. If you had

the environmental impact assessment completed and it passed damages and it passed all the requirements, I know the importance of job creation for dams that are built in the North. As long as there is appropriate training and job opportunities for northerners, and there are power sales, I have never been against it. I stated my case very early, and I stuck with it all the way through because I believe strongly in that.

When you talk about hydro systems in the Allan Lake area, there is a golden opportunity for a lot of those reserves, because once you bring in the higher voltage, you need to upgrade the wiring services in the homes. When you do that, you will be operating a lot of new appliances that the communities had not had the opportunity to use in the past.

Also, when you go into that, there are opportunities for various local aboriginal people to develop, or even the bands to develop, small contracting companies. When you look at appliances like toasters, kettles, irons and what have you, washers, dryers, stoves—when they start to break, someone has to be able to fix them, because you cannot fly them in and out of the community or bring in an electrician to fix them all the time.

So there are some beautiful, beautiful opportunities for individuals to start small appliance repairs, businesses right in those communities, with the proper supports from the community leaders and the government, even if they had to set up short training programs to get people to set up those kinds of businesses. If they are owned by local people, they will train and hire local individuals to work in their appliance repair companies.

There is going to be such a big need, and that is such a golden opportunity, but a lot of those individuals that we are talking about have not had the opportunity to train in those areas. I think now is the time to start and to assist the individuals to be entrepreneurs or at least to help the bands. So has the government initiated or been in discussions with any community leaders or community people in that direction?

Mr. Downey: Two areas that I would like to address: one, the answer is yes there are, I think, a number of opportunities that the communities will benefit from, and I stated them at the outset. One would be the supply of the overland line system

that would give them the same type of hydro service that the rest of the country has; secondly, employment opportunities in the establishment of the line, which is going to cost something like \$117 million in 1996-97 dollars, which is a 10 percent Hydro, 15 percent provincial and 75 percent federal split.

Of course, as well, there is an upgrading of the wiring in the houses, appliance supply: a major, major economic spin to this whole thing. That, to me, has the kind of employment opportunities that we are looking for. At the end of the day you have got meaningful infrastructure, you have power that will generate other activities, and you have to upgrade your communities to accommodate the upgrade of power.

It is just a win-win situation. That is why we have continually pressed for it. I guess I am a little surprised and, again, I think it is fair to put on the record now that the individual is no longer a member of your party, but the former member for that area, I would have thought would have been able to make the case in a stronger way than what he did in the past. That is, I think, the disappointing part, that for whatever reasons there were not completions of deals made to support those communities.

* (2310)

As I say, I do not know what the reasons are, but it would have been, I think, very appropriate for the former member to have advanced this kind of a project for his own community. I am pleased to be able to do it.

In fact, I say to the member, any time that I will be in those communities and in the North, I will make reference to it. I say the work that has been carried out—and he has asked if we have worked with the chiefs. We have been working with the Northeast Community Futures program, with a board of directors, our chiefs from northeast Manitoba. I think, approximately nine chiefs are involved.

Let me just go back to the gaming one, because we have to make a clarification on the record as to where we are at. The Assembly of Chiefs came forward with the position of wanting to establish a central gaming authority, an Assembly of Chiefs native central gaming authority.

What I was not able to detect, and still have not been able to, that those 61 bands out there wanted the Assembly of Chiefs to collect all the money from

all the gaming, from all the reserves, take that money as an assembly central organization and then redistribute it back to the communities.

I have not been able to detect that. In fact, it is very much the opposite, that the bands have come forward, and now I have something like 20 bands who have set up gaming commissions. We have 15 to 20 bands that have permits or licences which approximately 40 of them have not established. We have some that, quite frankly, have not approached us in any way as it relates to the gaming issue.

So I am not sold. The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey), Phil Fontaine, the Assembly of Chiefs has not sold me on the fact that the individual bands want anything more than the ability to establish their own gaming activities under their own authority, under their own gaming commissions on their individual reserves.

I am not, and I say, I am not convinced that that is what they want to do; in fact, I say to the contrary. Whether it is The Pas, whether it is the Dakota bands who have come forward as a group of people, we are still signing. We have just signed some recently that, quite frankly, if they did not want to proceed, they would not be here continuing to negotiate and sign.

So, I am not saying in a way in which is to be negative or critical of the assembly, but I have not got the evidence that the support is there for the approach that the member is putting before this committee.

So, with the greatest of respect, we are proceeding to fulfill the requests of the individual bands as they come forward by agreement. I think the member might want to check with some of the individual bands and the different chiefs as to whether or not they are still of the mind that he thinks that they are. Again, it is my job to try and proceed in an objective way with those bands that approach us.

I want to add something else. That is that there has been a little bit of a misunderstanding in some of the reporting that I have seen in some of the northern newspapers as it relates to what we have done as it relates to our funding and our payment of funds under the rural initiative and the VLT funding.

We have established a formula which was approved and accepted by the Northern Association of Community Councils to pay a certain

block fund to each community and also a per capita grant to them. So on top of what we have talked about here in funding for our Northern Affairs communities, we have seen \$62,000 in additional funds which have been returned to those communities.

Again, that is not the total amount of money that has gone to northern Manitoba. One of the press reports said, that was the amount of money. This is the money that went to 56 communities. When one looks at Flin Flon, one looks at The Pas, one looks at Thompson and adds those numbers together—and Gillam—there is a considerable amount more money that has gone to the North than what has been referred to in these numbers. This money that we are referring to, the \$62,000, was that money that went to the individual Northern Affairs communities.

So I think we are being fair in our approach. I think it would have been, and I want the member to acknowledge this, less than fair if we would have neglected to put monies back in those communities, because they in fact contribute to the system through the VLT program as well.

The point I am trying to make is that I think progress has been made, never fast enough in certain areas, but generally speaking, when one looks across the board, the areas that I have been responsible for I am satisfied we have moved aggressively.

I give credit to the Department of Northern and Native Affairs, the Native Affairs Secretariat. I give credit to the Northern Association of Community Councils.

I want to point out, a year ago, the Northern Association of Community Councils presented me with a situation where they were in an extremely difficult financial situation. They looked for additional money from the province and we did not have any. They made some very, very tough decisions internally. They said, we will reduce our staff, we will cut some of our expenditures, and we will get the books balanced, and they did. They did so by reducing their expenditures. I compliment the president and the board of directors, because they have turned around their difficulties and, I think, are playing a more meaningful role for the work they do in representing their communities.

So I just say, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, every time the member—when we talk it opens up new areas

for further discussion. But I think that is helpful. That is what the debate is all about here. It is debate to raise issues, to talk pro and con, to how we can improve in certain areas. We are not always going to agree, but at least we can, I think, honestly debate each side of the issue, and sometimes we will even agree.

Mr. Hckes: Yes, we agree quite a bit of the time, but we also at times disagree. When I was talking about—I did not really want to get into that whole gaming issue, but what I say about the structure of the aboriginal gaming and when the minister says, well, would these bands have the various agreements, that was the whole principle of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. They were talking about jurisdiction, and these bands that have agreements with the province, they would still be able to operate their bingos and their break-open tickets, but under the jurisdiction of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs which they are partners to. That would not change.

They are not saying that you lose your local bingo, you lose your local break-open tickets and stuff like that. In all the meetings that I have had with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, I have never heard them say that once. They are talking about jurisdiction where the bands would be operated under the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. That way they would have—and where? Like Shamattawa, Tadoule Lake through their little local bingos and their ticket sales do not bring in enough revenues for whatever they want. If they want to build a skating rink, for instance, then some of that could be offset by some of the gambling dollars from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. That is what they were talking about. They were not talking about only having one operation here or one operation there. That is what they were talking about, that the jurisdiction of all gaming would come under the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, whether it is break-open tickets or bingo. That is what the reference is that they were making.

I was surprised when you mentioned this. I was not going to bring it up because I thought you would be embarrassed—\$62,300 for 56 northern communities. Look at the population. That is only about—what is it, about \$1,200 per community? What can you do with that? Maybe if you tied this into your recreation programs and used it for some recreational equipment or something, then that would make sense. That is about as far as it is

going to go. You know, this kind of money is not going to go very far in northern Manitoba. Like, from VLT revenues, a lot of those people in northern Manitoba in those communities, the grant that one community gets one individual could lose that in one evening.

* (2320)

That is why I did not really want to get into that, because it is not very much money for all the millions of dollars that VLT revenues are bringing in. You mentioned the various bigger communities of Thompson, The Pas, Flin Flon, whatever, a lot of those VLT revenues that are—if you even looked at Thompson, a lot of those VLT revenues that they bring in in Thompson is not only from the citizens of Thompson. A lot of it is from the various outlying communities. and that is what you are talking about giving \$1,200 to. You take a look at Cross Lake, Norway House, Nelson House, all the various communities; they come into Thompson. A lot of them play the VLTs, so they would like some of their money back too. So when you talk about that kind of return back into the community, it is not very much for the amount of dollars that the VLTs are pulling in.

That will be addressed when they get into Estimates of the minister that is responsible for lotteries, but I would just like to veer away a little bit. I would like to ask the minister a very serious question that was brought to me. It pertained to the aboriginal war veterans. The aboriginal war veterans have been trying to get organized to tie in with the National Native Veterans Association. They have finally got organized, and they have had a few meetings and stuff. They wanted \$10,000 from the minister to attend a conference in Ottawa. They wanted \$10,000 to send representatives because they were going to meet with the national organization, the president, to open up a Manitoba chapter.

We have aboriginal veterans right across Manitoba, and those are the people who had fought in various wars and fought for us and have gone back into their communities. They were not given land like some of the other war veterans that came back from the war, because they were living on a reserve, and they were considered to already have land. So in reality, they got very little from the benefits that were supposed to be there for the war veterans.

They asked the minister for \$10,000 to go to Ottawa. What they were promised, I think, was three or four airplane tickets, and that was it. They had no funds for a hotel room or meals, and we are talking about war veterans that have absolutely nothing, and they were trying to set up a chapter in Manitoba. I am glad they went forward and still did it, but they could not even go to Ottawa. How were they going to go? The plane tickets were fine, but they had no accommodations, no hotels, and I think that is a very, very little sum of money to be given to our aboriginal war veterans who got nothing when they returned back from the war, compared to other war veterans. That is all they were asking for, was \$10,000 to help them get established.

I would just like to ask the minister what happened there, because I think it is a disgraceful way to treat our aboriginal war veterans who are becoming fewer and fewer every year. They even have tried to develop their own organizations in Cross Lake and Peguis and Brokenhead and The Pas, and various northern communities, Norway House. Those are the kind of people that we need to look at with dignity and to try and assist them to develop something that they believe is rightfully an organization that they have the right to belong to, and we should try and assist them in attaining that goal. I would just like to ask the minister what happened there, and if he has had any further contact with the aboriginal war veterans?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me at the outset say that government, as well, very much recognizes the contribution of the aboriginal war veterans and all war veterans. Without their commitment and their dedication and their sacrifice, we would not have the kind of country that we have that we can sit here and debate, without fear of retribution, without fear of military action. I think we are certainly on the same wavelength.

What I did not have was the kind of amounts of money that the member is talking about, but we did move to a system the best way possible that we could to provide some support through airline tickets to accommodate some of the elders. Not enough, granted, not enough, but at least there was some funding put together to make sure those individuals could attend their central function and work towards their chapter here in Manitoba.

I guess the question is, because we did not support them to the amount that they requested, does that make us less appreciative of the

contribution? I think not. I think that the people who went indicated their appreciation to us. They understood, as many of the elders and the people that the member represents and brings to this table understand, the difficult financial decisions that we have to make.

They were there. They were supported by the government. It was to the best of our ability, and I too want to acknowledge the contribution that they made to maintain and make sure that we have the democratic society that we all are able to live in and enjoy.

Mr. Hickes: I only have a few more questions. I would like to ask the minister if he is going to be taking the lead in discussing with his colleagues the possibility of trying to do something for the northern fishermen through the reduction of the freight subsidy—well, the cancellation of the freight subsidy—and the co-op auditing services?

I know that Bloodvein, or Berens River Co-op, the minister had sent a team in there to help them do the auditing. I know that because they let me know, and they were very pleased with that assistance.

What is going to happen now with the freight subsidy? Is it gone and that is it, or is there going to be any attempt to assist these fishermen?

Mr. Downey: I appreciate the member raising the question. It is a matter of dealing, of course, with the Department of Natural Resources which had been the traditional funder of this program. I cannot speak for the minister, and I can tell you that the Department of Northern Affairs has appreciated the support the Department of Natural Resources has given to the northern communities. I have heard the minister say that he certainly has not given up, that there may be an opportunity at some point to try to enhance, either through federal support or other support, the fishing industry in the North.

* (2330)

Let me just try and deal with this from a little different point of view, and I am again encouraged by the approach made by the Island Lake communities. What we have seen is the northern communities, some of the remote communities coming forward with the desire to further process in their communities the fish that they catch to a further processed state. I think we can assure the member that anything we can do that would

support the harvesting of the resources in the North is extremely critical.

Again, there still is a freight subsidy in place, not to the level at which it had traditionally been, but there is still some. With some of the ideas that are coming forward from our communities, with some of the desire to try to enhance and extend the market opportunities for some of the nontraditional saleable fish products, I think there will be some future opportunities. I am pleased to be the minister responsible for what is known as the Fishermen's Loan Program under CEDF, which I think is playing a more important role than they did in the past.

For many years the loan program for fishermen was under the Department of Agriculture. I think it was important when changes were made that it became more responsive and more readily available to the northerners through the Community Economic Development Fund. The member may say, well, it is a loan program, not a grant. That is true. But again with a difficult situation that we have all faced, I think it is at least important to say there still is some form of support through a loan program to help the industry.

The freight subsidy is one which will take further debate. I would hope that over time we can see the resource-based industries—I guess, use the words not revert back—but to do what it has traditionally done for the northern communities, and that is provide a base income for our northern and native communities.

Let me say as well, just while we are on the resource industries, I think it is important to again point out some of the beneficial things that are taking place. There have been ups and downs, as the farm community sees in the production of the resources that farmers produce. The wild rice industry I think has shown that it has potential. Yes, we have seen some difficulties with it, but the basis, the people, the types of production opportunities are there, and it needs some continued confidence. It needs continued technological upgrade. They need equipment, and we hope to be able to continue to work to resolve some of the issues that are there, not unlike the fish industry.

There are issues. There are policy matters and, of course, at the end of the day, it has to be economical for those individuals to produce the

product and bring it to the marketplace. Hopefully, though, we can bring it to the marketplace after further processing in some of our outlying communities, because it is the jobs, it is those kinds of jobs that are more immediate than anything else, and I think it is a matter of us working to enhance those opportunities.

I will be speaking with the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) as a result of the questions that are raised here tonight, and I am sure during the debates which will ensue with the minister that the member will be able to get more clarification from him on this issue.

Mr. Hickes: Well, the last sentence, that is what I have been trying to say all night, when the minister said I will be speaking to the Minister of Natural Resources. That is what the aboriginal community has always been asking is when the minister who is responsible for aboriginal people, when he sees something happening, to stand up and ask questions on behalf of the people the minister represents.

When I listed off all the cutbacks and some of the initiatives that are in statements right in this paper of the Native Affairs Secretariat—develops policy and options, negotiates aboriginal self-government with aboriginal peoples—I have to mention again, the key to that for the aboriginal people is education, and the minister knows that. So when the minister sees where there are cutbacks to education opportunities for aboriginal people, I hope the minister stands up in cabinet and says, hey, this will have a negative impact on aboriginal people.

That is what I have been trying to get across all evening here, and the minister said it in one sentence. He said he will talk to the Minister of Northern Affairs about the freight subsidy. I hope the minister will also talk to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), and in discussions, yes, it might not be possible, but at least they know that the minister's interest is representing the aboriginal people. The aboriginal people need to hear that, that the minister will stand up at the cabinet table for the aboriginal people.

I only have one more, I guess a question to do with Aboriginal Development Programs. What is that on the line here where it says Aboriginal Development Programs? You see the dollar figure

of 1992-93 of \$1,338,000 and then in '93-94 it has been reduced to \$772,600. Why would that be?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me just take a couple of minutes and respond to the member in his overall comments. I can assure him, and I will even go back to some of the positive things that I referred to earlier, and that, of course, being the work that I have done with my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources when it comes to, for example, the Split Lake agreement and the need to bring the Department of Natural Resources, Crown lands. When it comes to the Department of Education and the nursing program in the Swampy Cree, support was given.

I stood up on behalf of the communities when it relates to the gaming agreement, working with the Attorney General's office to press to make sure some of those issues are resolved; to stand up for job opportunities and the development of a new overland hydro system; to continue to get support to work with urban seniors in the Kekinan Centre—a broad range of areas which I say that my colleagues and I feel are good programs and have worked co-operatively.

I can tell the member, he can tell the native people of the northern and native community that I have stood up and will continue to stand up to represent them to the best of my ability. I am prepared to go through the list of accomplishments, not in a boastful way, because that is not my normal approach. I think it is a matter of people seeing some of the positive results and reminding them of where it was initiated. Again, I give a lot of credit to my colleagues, to our Premier (Mr. Filmon), to the caucus of which I sit as a member.

I have never had an individual come forward and in any way say that we were spending money that we should not be in an area that falls in our northern communities. In fact, very much the other way. I think there has been extreme interest from our caucus colleagues and very supportive. I say that genuinely. The important thing, as I indicated, was caucus, and I have had extremely good support. I would anticipate that will continue and would hope for it.

I want to talk as well just a bit about some of the additional funding sources that are started on pilot projects. That is the area of tobacco tax, the working with the communities to allow them to have the tobacco tax maintained in their communities, as

well as the gas tax project, which is another pilot project which, again, I think, is an important indication as to the importance our government places on the responsibility of the reserve communities to carry out some of the responsibilities that they have requested.

I am going to deal with the reductions that the member talks about, and again I will reiterate how the funding decisions were made. The reductions that he talks about mainly are from the areas that I talked about earlier, the Assembly of Chiefs, which was some \$325,000; MKO, \$78,500; First Nations 60; and Southeast 15.7.

Again, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the reason behind those 100 percent cuts are that we have in fact put in place additional abilities to raise funds, either through lotteries or gaming on the reserves, the taxation measures which I have talked about. They do have the ability. The assembly does have the ability and the bands have the ability to fund through their budgets an amount of something like \$5,000 per band to have the assembly speak on their behalf. If they feel strongly enough about the representation the assembly gives them, then they have the ability to do so.

* (2340)

Now, the urban representation, the aboriginal council does not have the ability to go to any band to get funding. They are a group of individuals who are organized collectively to try to improve the situation for the urban native people. The indigenous women, another group which does not have any other form of funding available to them, as we speak of the Manitoba Metis Federation, again, they do not have the kind of funding sources or the ability to draw funds from the individual bands.

The Northern Association of Community Councils—and I want to just go back to the numbers which I talked about earlier—last year they were in a situation of a \$60,000 deficit. They, through good management and their own desire to sort out their affairs, sorted it out, and at the end of March 31, 1993, had a \$12,000 surplus. I am sorry, they went to virtually no deficit at all, just a small surplus.

I think the communities out there are desirous of representing their people. They have been very, and I say this as it relates to the Northern Association of Community Councils, fair in their

request for support from government. They played an extremely meaningful role, and I will reiterate it again, they have worked very closely with the government and the Department of Northern Affairs as it relates to the incorporation or the future incorporation of their communities, which would in fact give them the local decision making that they want, that all approvals do not have to come from the Minister of Northern Affairs if they want to do something in their community, that it is truly municipal government being established.

Those are the reasons behind it, and I know the assembly was not happy. I know that the other organizations were not happy that we reduced or eliminated their funding, but I again go back and reiterate the reasons for it. The assembly has the ability to get funding from the 61 bands if the 61 bands feel that they are doing a service for them. It just is the way it is, whereas the aboriginal council does not have the ability to go to the bands as do the assembly.

The same applies for the indigenous women. I know they are all concerned that they saw a 10 percent reduction. Those that did not see a total elimination saw a 10 percent reduction. Again, that was consistent with what took place across the board as far as government funding for organizations were involved.

On balance, and I say on balance, I am prepared to meet and prepared to debate and prepared to discuss all the reasons for decisions that are made as it relates to our department. I would continually work towards—and I say this as we see the recommendations brought forward by the Northern Economic Development Commission. The work that was done by the commissioners, I compliment them. There was a good mix of people. I think all areas of the North were represented. They genuinely came forward with their best effort. As we look at their recommendations, we will be communicating publicly as soon as possible how we can further advance.

Another area that I was negligent in acknowledging—and I made reference to the mining industry. We have seen, over the past year, work taking place in the Split Lake area as it relates to some geological work from a company that has a permit. I want to thank and compliment the leadership of the Split Lake community in the permitting process, the co-operation that was given to work with that company to assist them in the

work they had to do. They acknowledged that there was a substantial aboriginal interest in the area. They, I understand, hired a considerable number of people from that community. That is what it is all about. It is people working with people, using the resources that are available to them to maximize the opportunities, and particularly at a local level.

I know the member may recall, because I can recall some of the criticisms, and he is pretty familiar with the Limestone project. What a lot of people came forward to me with was the criticism that we have northern people, yet there are a lot of people moving in from out of province, or a lot of people coming in to take jobs that our northern people had. He maybe did not have those kinds of criticisms, but I am aware of some. You cannot have exclusive jobs for people in a certain region. You will see people who are very mobile and move back and forth, but the opportunities that are there, we should maximize the opportunities for our local people.

Let me just give some numbers to the member which I think are important and should be put on the record as it relates to the hiring of people within our Northern Affairs department, Northern and Native Affairs. Of our workforce in the Northern and Native Affairs department, 1993, we had some 29 percent aboriginal people working within the Northern and Native Affairs—[interjection] Okay. I will put them on the record, but I just thought it would be an opportunity to do so. It is ranged from 31 percent to 28 to 30 to 29. So it is right in that 29-30 percent range.

As it relates to females, there has been a substantial increase over the past year. It has gone up, it has gone down, but we are back up again at some 56 percent of our Northern and Native Affairs department that is female.

I think those are the kinds of numbers that he refers to the fact that the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) may ask these questions. I think it is important when we talk about employment and what we are doing within our own department. I am pleased with the numbers, and I think that we shall continue to strive to maximize the opportunities for our northern and native community people.

Mr. Hickes: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if I heard correctly, those were employment figures for Northern Affairs.

Mr. Downey: And Native.

Mr. Hlckes: Well, okay, I see here under Native Affairs Secretariat, there is a total of nine people employed. Who is the manager for Native Affairs Secretariat?

Mr. Downey: Harvey Bostrom.

Mr. Hlckes: He had five professional and technical support people, and how many are aboriginal?

Mr. Downey: There were three out of the five, and one has just retired.

Mr. Hlckes: Okay, and how about with the administrative support, how many are aboriginal out of the three?

Mr. Downey: I am told they all are.

* (2350)

Mr. Hlckes: Out of all of the employees with the Native Affairs Secretariat, it looks like a very good record—

Mr. Downey: Thank you.

Mr. Hlckes: —from what I see. How about the minister's office? How many direct staff, assistants or executive assistants for Northern and Native Affairs does the minister have without secretariat staff?

Mr. Downey: I have been running with a very lean shop. I have had one special assistant for the past year who works very hard. We should have more, but at this point I do not have, but it is one.

Mr. Hlckes: For advisory and executive director?

Mr. Downey: Yes, special assistant, and I want to say that I as well—I am sorry, I said one for the past year. I had an individual who worked for me, aboriginal, excellent person. Another department came along and found how qualified he was and offered him a better job than I was able to provide.

So it is not that I did not want to have an additional person, and I wanted to have this individual because I can say nothing but top marks for the individual. He was very good at the work he does. I was pleased to see him advance and, quite frankly, am prepared to entertain an individual if there are other aboriginal people that are looking for that type of work. I would certainly be prepared to entertain discussing employment with them.

But, George, you would have to quit if you wanted to apply.

Mr. Hlckes: Well, I would not want to try and replace your special assistant. I know he is a very hard-working individual, and you have a good special assistant there. So I will not get into that. Maybe someday he will get a promotion too, because I think he deserves one the way I see him around the building here. I do not really have any more questions.

I would just like to thank the minister for his openness and his frank comments, and I would like to thank his staff that are here that provided some of the answers. I hope after tonight—I know in a lot of ways the minister has been working towards the betterment of aboriginal people, and I hope the minister will dialogue and set up some meetings with the aboriginal leadership and the federal government, and provincial, to try and maybe cost-share some things where it is not so costly for any level of government, and maybe we could get a lot more progress done.

I hope that the minister will stand in cabinet and discuss some of the issues that we raised tonight and maybe look at addressing the real serious issue in the North pertaining to solvent abuse and work with his colleagues in the federal government and the aboriginal leadership and hopefully come up with some form of answer before we lose any more very talented young individuals that we need as our future leaders.

So I thank the minister and his staff for the frankness. I gained a lot of experience tonight. I am learning every day. Thanks a lot.

Mr. Downey: I thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the member for Point Douglas. This has been a productive debate, and I look forward to the conclusion of the Estimates when we do our Northern Affairs portion with the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin).

I would just like to go back to the comments the member made about the solvent abuse and substance abuse. When one looks at the communities, when you look at the devastation that Shamattawa has gone through, and you look at some of the results and the impact of what happens to these communities after you have several generations of substance abuse, it really is a test to all of us. Whether we are federal, provincial, municipal, church groups, opposition, all members I think have to put their best minds to try to find some solutions, because it is truly, in today's world,

a very unfortunate situation that something more cannot be done.

I take my hat off to the front-line workers, because when they are dealing with these situations day after day and the devastation that they see and the condition in which some of the people get in, and they have to try to make the best of it with the situation that is not very desirable, and there becomes certainly violent situations which they have to deal with and family situations, and it just is very difficult.

So I think we all have an obligation to try and find some solutions to it, and I again acknowledge the constructive—and I say that genuinely—approach that the member puts forward.

I will conclude my remarks by saying the things that I really have come to appreciate with the aboriginal communities and the people that I have had the privilege, and I say privilege of working with, and that is the respect for the Creator, their concern and their genuine love for their family, and probably as important as anything is the sense of humour which they enjoy, and the fun they have and the sense of humour that they have. They still have the ability to have fun even though they have faced some very, very difficult situations in their lives.

It has been rewarding to me. I hope the friendships that I have made over the many years will continue. I can tell the member I am genuinely working to try to improve the situation. I know that there will be criticisms, I know that is what the political arena is all about, but at the end of the day the important thing is what is done, not necessarily who has done it. I think we all have to strive to improve the situation, and we will.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. It has been a productive evening.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The hour being 11:57 p.m., committee rise.

LABOUR

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. The Committee of Supply will reconvene. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Labour. We will begin with a statement from the minister responsible.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Madam Chairperson, I will endeavour to make my

remarks as brief as possible as I outline some of the changes that members may observe in the Estimates of the department.

First of all, funds requested for 1993-94 represent a reduction of 10 percent from 1992-93. One major structural change in the past year which accounts for a significant portion of this financial difference was the transfer of the Apprenticeship and Training Branch to the Department of Education and Training. Their estimates no longer appear as part of the Estimates of this department. We believe this relocation will result in the revitalization and strengthening of this important program area to better serve the needs of Manitobans.

The department continues its policy of actively seeking the advice and input of labour and business through a number of external advisory committees. The Labour Management Review Committee and the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health provide valuable advice and assistance to assure our legislation and policies respond to the needs of Manitobans. As part of this policy, the department provides research and administrative support services to these committees. I am pleased to inform members of the committee that The Construction Industry Wages Act review committee has completed a very extensive review and assessment of that particular piece of legislation. Their report has been forwarded to the Labour Management Review Committee for study. I believe that report is in the process of being provided to my office or has just been received in the last few days by my office, and I look forward to reviewing the recommendations on this particular piece of legislation.

Also, I am pleased to inform members that Ministers of Labour across Canada have co-operated to establish a project that will provide outside practical advice on appropriate roles government can play to facilitate effective labour-business relations with respect to economic restructuring. The ministers have commissioned the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre to conduct this study. I expect this advice will be useful in assisting our efforts to foster labour-business relationships that will have a positive impact on Manitoba's and indeed Canada's economic development. The committee includes Susan Hart-Kulbaba of the Manitoba

Federation of Labour as well as Tom Farrell, who is our new Deputy Minister of Labour.

The department has initiated a process to improve general safety in Manitoba over the past year. A detailed review of eight general safety acts and their associated regulations is currently underway. We are planning direct consultation with industry and the public to ascertain specific concerns with this body of legislation and on safety issues in general. With respect to some other specific branches of the department, with respect to particularly the Mechanical and Engineering Branch, in 1992-93 the branch has pursued its commitment to affirmative action and has initiated a competition with the view to hiring Manitoba's first woman boiler inspector. The branch is also updating and streamlining the trades licence renewal procedure with the help of a local area network system installed in the Norquay Building here in Winnipeg. This will significantly reduce the time required to issue licences.

The Conciliation and Mediation Services Branch continues to give the labour relations community unparalleled service. For instance, staff are currently resolving approximately 84 percent of their grievance mediation cases and 97 percent of conciliation cases without any work stoppages. The branch's record in resolving grievance mediation cases continues to facilitate good relations between labour and management as well as creating substantial savings in arbitration costs.

The Fire Commissioner's office over the past year has taken on a number of initiatives that are strengthening the awareness of fire hazards and increasing the number of Manitobans trained in fire response techniques. As part of the Mutual Aid system embracing the municipalities in individual Mutual Aid Districts throughout the province, 20 in all, the office continued its financial training incentives. These are resulting in higher numbers of locally trained fire and emergency response personnel throughout our province. Mutual Aid District grants continue, and Level I and II fire fighting training tapes are currently being supplied to those districts.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner will be acquiring a fourth emergency response trailer, and additional portable emergency phone banks in this current year for service in our Mutual Aid Districts. Like the other three trailers that were developed by the Fire Commissioner's office, they will be

strategically located throughout the province and made available to Mutual Aid Districts. This becomes particularly important during the summer fire season.

The 1992 version of the Manitoba Building, Plumbing and Fire Codes have been approved, printed and are now available. The Office of the Fire Commissioner has also completed plans—we are very excited about this—for the approximately \$1.9 million expansion to the Emergency Services Training Centre, formerly known as the Manitoba Fire College in Brandon.

Completion of the project, expected in the fall of 1994, will greatly increase the ability of the office to serve and protect Manitobans and will allow the Emergency Services Training Centre to become a centre for pre-employment training for the west and central part of North America. This being on a full cost-recovery basis, certainly has the potential to have a major economic impact in Brandon and southwestern Manitoba as it attracts students to this particular facility. The \$2 million expansion, as I have indicated, will lead to additional jobs, potentially, and provision of services for those students attending the college in Brandon.

The Engineering Safety Unit, which was previously known as Plans, Examination and Inspection, which was housed with the Department of Rural Development, has returned to the Department of Labour giving clients a one-stop shopping for all public safety services. We, by the way, are one of the few provinces in Canada which has most of its public—in fact, the lion's share of its public safety, plans, inspection areas housed in one particular department.

* (2010)

The Pension Commission of Manitoba, as part of its mandate to promote the establishment, extension and improvement of pensions, had issued a year or so ago the discussion paper, The Promotion of Private Pension Plans in Manitoba, and held a number of days of public hearings on this paper. As a result of this consultation process, the commission recommended a number of changes in The Pension Benefits Act and its regulations which were enacted in the last session of the Legislative Assembly. Many of the regulations are currently in the process of being implemented. One key change was the creation of the Life Income Fund or LIF, which allows people

much more flexibility in designing their retirement income and specifying a starting date for receiving it.

A special task force has been struck to investigate the creation of pension plans for small employers. This has certainly been an area where we have been lacking in our current mix of retirement plans and pension plans in the province. These plans will contain—or this task force will make recommendations for special provisions which was provided for in the amendments to the pension act that will accommodate the special needs of small pension plans. We certainly hope this measure will lead to the creation of more pension plans for employers who have a limited number, small number of employees. We certainly look forward to the completion of the work of this task force and the recommendations which should be received some time in this year.

The Pay Equity Bureau continues to promote equality in the workplace. In the past year, the bureau has worked with 53 school divisions and districts to implement pay equity practices on a voluntary basis. I am very pleased with the work that has gone on in that particular area to date.

With respect to Workplace Safety Health and Support Services division of the department, the Employment Standards branch, which is housed in that area of the department, has reduced the backlog for investigating complaints from six months in 1991 to less than one month today. The average time to finalize a complaint is now about two months from the point that the complaint is filed.

Three prosecutions, all successful, were undertaken in this area in the last year. Two of those prosecutions, under The Employment Standards Act, were the first in about 15 years. The other, under The Construction Industry Wages Act, was the first in about 20 years.

The Payment of Wages Fund has been restricted to allow for pay out of only earned wages, not vacation pay, as was previously the case. The fund has consequently been reduced from \$570,000 to \$300,000 to reflect this change in policy.

I am sure there are some issues with respect to that change, and how it fits into the unemployment insurance scheme that members will want to discuss when we get to that part of the Estimates.

The branch has entered into a partnership with the Department of Education and Training to have employment standards law taught to all Grade 10 students as a mandatory part of the Skills for Independent Living program.

Another initiative of this branch, with the Multiculturalism Secretariat, has been to facilitate better links and understanding with a number of communities within our province. To date, we have worked with the Cree, Saulteaux, Polish, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Laotian communities. The branch has provided one to three months of training to volunteers from these communities to increase understanding of employer and employee rights and responsibilities under our various employment standards legislation.

This initiative, which we hope to expand in the coming years, certainly brings the law home to many Manitobans who otherwise would not have had easy access to employment standards legislation. The initiative has also led to branch material being translated into the languages of the communities which we have worked with to date and distributed on a more wide basis.

The Worker Advisor Office has seen a growing demand for services. In 1993-94, the office expects to handle about 2,100 requests for service. Increased staffing, improvements in office operation, and community interest in education have caused a steady decline in the waiting list from six months, the worst case this year, where we had some vacancies in our staff, and we are in the process of filling them to the point where, as of today, we have virtually eliminated the waiting list altogether.

Other 1993-94 plans include increasing public education through programs and information materials, in conjunction with the Workers Compensation Board and other partners in the community.

The office and the department are also having discussions with the Workers Compensation Board to improve the operation of the office. These discussions have already led to improved technological ability. As I am sure honourable members opposite will appreciate, the ability to communicate between the Worker Advisor Office and the Workers Compensation Board through computer links speeds up the information flow and the ability to resolve issues in a timely fashion.

The Mines Inspection Branch has been working on a tripartite committee, which has been reviewing the operations of mines regulations and has continued this work during 1992. The final draft of its report has been circulated for comments and responses. This joint project was initiated with the Department of Energy and Mines to co-ordinate inspection of pits and quarries in operations in the petroleum sector.

Inspectors can be now appointed under both The Workplace Safety and Health Act, and The Mines and Minerals Act and can conduct inspections under both acts. This change will provide better coverage and greatly improve efficiency of the staffs of both departments as 70 to 80 percent of the field time in inspecting aggregates was spent on travelling.

The Mines Inspection Branch participated in the evaluations of mine safety and contributed to the success of a made-in-Manitoba mine safety process to ensure the survivals of miners trapped below ground. This is a good example of a made-in-Manitoba product with industry and government working together.

The Workplace Safety and Health Branch will benefit this year from a new workplace information network, a computerized data base program that, when fully operational, will allow staff to have immediate access to information relating to branch activities.

For our Safety and Health Officers this WIN system, as we call it, gives them access to an accurate and complete listing of all client employers and their status. It helps determine priority of action, helps to plan field activities, identify status of safety and health committees, and assists in a wide variety of related functions.

The WIN system will also help program managers with a variety of monitoring and managerial tasks including those relating to staff workloads and performance, statistics, determining program success, decision making and, of course, planning. WIN is being introduced in stages. It is hoped that we will have it in full operation by this fall.

As one can appreciate, the prime purpose of all of these types of aids is to increase the time in which our inspection staff spends in the field, rather than doing administrative work in the office.

The Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health has made specific recommendations for updating regulations on first aid, hearing conservation and Workplace Safety and Health committees. I know these particular regulations have been the subject of questions in the House, and I am sure we will have some discussion on them later.

Appropriate amendments are being drafted in consultation currently with the Department of Justice. I am sure the critic from the New Democratic Party, who has raised this, will be able to get in some of the details later in discussion, I would hope, on each of those regulations.

A protocol on how to resolve indoor air quality problems has been developed jointly by the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta. It is being distributed to affected parties to assist them in this matter.

I should point out as well that we have various activities. We do joint activities with other departments. If my memory serves me correct, we have developed pamphlets, for example, a year or so ago with the Province of Saskatchewan which helps reduce our developmental and, ultimately, our production costs where we can share with other provinces.

Also developed is a guideline for the safe handling, abatement and disposal procedures for asbestos. It provides necessary information where presence of asbestos may pose a health hazard. Using Workers Compensation Board data and medical information, the Workplace Safety and Health Branch is focusing on high-risk endeavours and workplaces to more effectively reduce workplace injuries and illness.

A successful project with the Fire Commissioner's office and Imperial Oil Limited, aimed at improving safety and health awareness among farm children, is also continuing.

Complete packages of hearing materials are being assembled and distributed to the provincial fire chiefs, 4-H clubs and Women's Institute chapter organizations. Materials include comic books, safety kits, learning activities and a video to focus awareness on farm safety. Target audiences are the farm children between the ages of nine and 13 years. This has been a successful partnership between the department and Imperial Oil Limited.

I would like to point out to members opposite that our largest number of deaths in the workplace actually occur on farms, and it has been one of the toughest areas for us to work with, because we do not have the organizational structure in farm situations as we have in other workplaces. So that is the reason we have certainly been targeting that particular area.

I would also like to have the opportunity to describe briefly two pilot projects that have changed service operations in the branch. From mid-October to mid-December 1992, the branch conducted an intake officer project. Although not advertised, 526 inquiries were received, 50 percent from workers, 34 percent from employers and 6 percent from professionals. It became apparent that the service could be expanded to include opportunities for employers and workers to contact the branch after normal business hours, as well as to assist with the permit system which gets backlogged in the early morning, as well as working with research inquiries that could not all be answered at once.

* (2020)

As a result, the branch moved to offer expanded inquiry services. The service operates to 8 p.m. on Mondays and to 6 p.m. Tuesdays to Fridays. This service has been announced in the WorkSafe newsletter, and a bulletin has been prepared for distribution.

We have also had our Occupational Health unit working to establish an occupational health nurse consulting position. In particular, this position would serve small worksites, such as radiator repair shops, where lead exposure may be excessive.

The Labour Adjustment unit of the department has been responsible for helping to mitigate the effects of downsizing adjustments. Now more than 30 active workforce adjustment agreements have been signed. The unit is supporting a broadly based personnel planning committee of aboriginal communities to develop a plan to help people in those communities take advantage of forthcoming job opportunities that may exist.

In 1992-93, 39 employees became eligible for benefits under the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, or POWA, as a result of previously approved layoffs. The cost to Manitoba was \$393,461. For 1993-94, program funding for

POWA has been withdrawn due to the limited number of people benefiting from the program and the very restrictive criteria. Other program actions are currently being explored, also in consultation with the federal government. This particular area also accounts for one of the major areas of reduction in the department's budget for this year.

Those are my remarks, Madam Chair, and I look forward to the discussion with the various critics.

Madam Chairperson: We will now hear from the critic for the official opposition party, the honourable member for Wolseley.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Chair, before I start, I wanted to say to the minister and to the critic for the second opposition party, that our party has divided the responsibilities for what is covered by the Labour department at the moment. That is, the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) is the critic for Workplace Health and Safety, and the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is the critic for worker compensation programs and Worker Advisors, and both of those will be asking questions at some point during the evening.

I wanted to start by putting some general comments on the record. This is a department whose goal is to foster a stable labour relations climate to support workplace training and adjustment. It is attempting to do this in very difficult times. It is a new era of economic, global change, particularly characterized by the very fast and free and unregulated transfers of financial services and of capital.

Those conditions, which have been in place perhaps for the past 10 years, put enormous pressures upon labour in a time when capital is easily able to withdraw from any particular jurisdiction, particularly in areas of industries where there is resource extraction involved. I think that is one of the most difficult areas in every country of the globe. Manitoba certainly faces those kinds of problems in its employment and its regulation of those sectors.

I would, of course, if we had more time, perhaps discuss the role of the Conservative Party in the deregulation of capital and the impact that it has had upon labour across this country and upon the ability of capital essentially to strike, to withdraw from a particular country or from a community.

We are, thanks to this government and their colleagues in Ottawa, into an era of deregulation

where the goals of communities, the responsibilities of communities towards labour are increasingly difficult to fulfill. In fact, that is the purpose of much of the deregulation, to free capital, to be in that position to exert a much greater pressure over labour than it has in the period since the Second World War.

The Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the forthcoming agreement with Mexico are very immediate examples of the nature of those kinds of changes in the balance between labour and capital in this country. What we are seeing across the country is the pressure upon labour to lower their wages, to lower their estimates, to lower their resistance to the demands of a much more liberated capital sector.

So we find, for example, in Manitoba the loss of over 1,500 jobs, primarily in the resource sector over the last two or three weeks with the expectation of more to come. This is really a continuation of a trend that we have seen in Manitoba over the past three or four years—the loss of high-skilled, high-wage jobs. Whether we are looking in the insurance sector, in the health sector, in the public sector, or now in Hydro, we are looking at relatively high-skill and high-wage jobs that are leaving the province.

What the context of this is, of course, is that it lowers the resistance of those who are left. It puts pressure upon the employer to extract more labour from those who are left. That does not have to be written anywhere. It can be written, I think, or seen on the faces of every worker in this province.

Manitoba used to have a progressive labour environment, progressive labour legislative environment. I think this goes back not just to our party, not just to Ed Schreyer, but certainly under Duff Roblin there were a number of significant changes made, particularly in the attempt to bring together labour and management, to create conditions, for example, of education for both labour and management.

Duff Roblin encouraged the work of people like Cam MacLean, for example, who is still working in this field, but they were both very early in that field of a progressive Manitoba perspective. I would, of course, argue from our perspective that the governments of both Ed Schreyer and of Howard Pawley had significant roles to play in expanding the innovative legislative framework of labour

legislation both in Manitoba and also in the context of Canada.

But what we have seen from this particular government since 1988, since they have received a majority, is a comparable pressure upon labour to that that is being exerted in the international market context as well. We have seen a continual eating away at the rights of labour, at the taking away of the rights to final offer selection, something which had played a part in enhancing the labour peace in Manitoba. That was—seems to be certainly something, stable labour relations climate, that this department is devoted to.

We have seen in more recent times, in this particular session, Bill 22, which for a department and for a government which claims to consult equally with labour and management, which fosters a stable labour relations climate, which subscribes to the principle of harmonious labour relations in Manitoba, seems to me an unconscionable act.

I cannot see that Bill 22 plays any part in the history of labour relations in Manitoba. It is a bill which has transferred to employers enormous potential powers, and it goes completely against the grain and the whole trend of labour legislation across Canada since the 1940s. It is not just a bill for two years of temporary restraint. It is a bill which has fundamental structural changes for labour and management in Manitoba.

We have also seen from this government, since 1990, certainly, no attempt, no interest, it appears, in increasing the minimum wage. When you look at the position of Manitoba and the minimum wage tables, Manitoba is either at the bottom or second from the bottom in the payment of minimum wage rates across Canada, and certainly as a proportion of the poverty line, the minimum wage rate in Manitoba has been declining since 1988.

The Construction Wages Act, again, the government minister—I have asked him this question in the House. The wages in the construction industry, the changes to those have been made almost in every occasion at least a year, if not more than a year, behind the appropriate time so that people in that industry are looking at wages that are a year behind in terms of the minimums that can be set. At the moment, the minister is not even prepared to give us a date when he will look at the recommendations of the board.

* (2030)

In Labour Adjustment, as the minister himself has said, we have one of the areas of the department which has seen a diminution in amounts. This at a time when there are large layoffs, 1500 in just over a week, large layoffs in the public sector, and continuing layoffs in the private sector, 40 jobs here, 50 jobs there, the removal of jobs to the southern United States and eventually to Mexico that we are seeing right across the line. Yet it is at this time that the government has permitted those areas of labour adjustment to either fall into abandonment in the case of the older worker, and the minister says that he is in fact renegotiating that. I look forward to that discussion. I hope that there certainly is something happening in that area.

Even beyond that, what we have in Manitoba is really a patchwork of Labour Adjustment Committees, and what I would have hoped to have seen from any government faced with the labour conditions, the employment conditions that we are facing in Manitoba was a strategy which looked at that from the longer-term perspective and tried to put in something which gave much greater security and much greater consistency across the labour force.

I am also concerned by the number of existing strikes that continue in Manitoba, to very long-term ones in particular at Northern Blower and at Trailmobile, and I look forward to discussing those particular ones with the minister at the appropriate time.

We have also seen a change in this department with the loss of Apprenticeship and some aspects of Training, and one of the things that has concerned many people in Manitoba is that those changes, the taking away of Apprenticeship from the Department of Labour, were done without any consultation with the Manitoba Federation of Labour or indeed any other federation of labour, certainly until after the fact. The minister, I think, any minister in this area, should be well aware of the concerns of labour about the relationship of that department to the shop floor, to the trade union movement and to the craft base as well in many cases. To transfer it to Education, although there may be some reasons for that, there may be ways of doing that which are appropriate, to do it without consultation, I again find one of the very strange

things about this department which claims to foster a stable relations climate in Manitoba.

So with that, Madam Chair, I will finish my introductory remarks and look forward to looking at the line-by-line.

Madam Chairperson: We will now have the opening statements from the critic for the second party opposition.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chairperson, I too just wanted to add a few words before we get into the line-by-line discussion and question-and-answer process.

Like the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), this is now just over five years since I have been inside the Chamber, and when I think in terms of Labour and mission statement or objectives, whatever you might want to call it, that this department is responsible for, one which I believe is most important in terms of labour relations, to provide harmony, and harmony is something that is in the Preamble of The Labour Relations Act and so forth.

I am concerned about the direction this government is taking with respect to harmony amongst unions and management and so forth with some of the actions. I have had a number of opportunities to be able to speak inside the Chamber and outside the Chamber with respect to labour relations in the province of Manitoba, and unfortunately I find that far too often we see too much politics being played inside this Chamber at the expense of the worker. I have always believed a good example of that, and the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) made reference to the former Premier Mr. Pawley, is in fact the whole discussion and debate around final offer selection

At that particular time, like the Minister of Labour, I had ample opportunity to sit down and listen to a lot of the debate that was going on. I think it embodies at least in most part what my feelings are towards both the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party with respect to fostering labour, positive labour relations in the province of Manitoba, and I do not want to go into too much more detail than that.

If we take a look at the point in time we are at today we will find the importance of adjusting our work force is crucial. How can we compete at the turn of the century unless we have a trained and educated work force that will be able to ensure that

we are ready and prepared for the global market, the global economy?

I have some very strong concerns in terms of the direction the provincial government has been taking us with that. I recall discussions previously with respect to the labour agreement with the federal government and how much time the ministers responsible, with this minister and the Minister of Education and the federal counterparts in not reaching or achieving an agreement, because at least in part, Madam Chairperson, it gave individuals to some degree a sense of hope that government was, in fact, thinking in terms of labour enhancement or job creation, training incentives and things of this nature. To sit on finalizing of an agreement of this nature, I think, did not do us any good at all.

There was a report that was released with respect to the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, and it was titled something to the effect of "Adjusting to Win," and if we look at that particular line in this government with Labour Adjustment you will find that there has, for all intents and purposes, been no increase. In fact, in this last budget there is somewhat of a decrease on it. In the past, I believe, it has been something in the neighbourhood of one-third of a cent increase per worker, and this is when we have seen so many changes occurring within the economy since 1988, since this government has taken power.

It is unfortunate that they do not believe there is more of a need for a proactive approach, a dealing with labour issues and particularly training and retraining, and the government has ample opportunities to be able to demonstrate its sincere approach at dealing with that issue by priorities.

We see what government's priorities are in terms of expenditures on the budget and the statements that they make, and I believe that there are a good number of Manitobans, working Manitobans or unemployed Manitobans or individuals that are facing unemployment because of whether it is free trade or a recession or downsizing, whatever one wants to call it.

Individuals like to believe that government is going to be there to ensure that there is something available in terms of upgrading and training and so forth.

I was also somewhat concerned, because I do want to keep my remarks somewhat brief, with

respect to the building codes. The minister made quick reference to them in his opening remarks. We are in a situation in which it has been a number of years that the minister has had opportunity to implement the changes from the last go-around, and we are already into the next round. Yet we have not seen those changes. That does cause concern from within the industry and so forth, and we will find out in terms of why it was necessary to see these sorts of delays.

With Workers Compensation, something that the minister is also responsible for, two years ago I was quite pleased with the government and its approach to Workers Compensation in the sense that we saw a tremendous backlog that existed when this government took office. They have been able, at least in part, to bring that backlog down through computerization and, I believe, making Workers Compensation offices that much more efficient in dealing with the case-by-case loads.

But I am still concerned with the number of calls that I am receiving from Workers Compensation recipients. I am very concerned with respect to the feeling, and I am getting more as the Workers Compensation critic, of individuals that are calling up and indicating to me and asking me the question, if you will, should they be getting a lawyer? That concerns me in terms of the costs and so forth, knowing full well that the Worker Advisors are in fact overworked and there seems to be a—well, the minister says that the backlog is at zero. I know that there still is a problem in terms of getting individuals from the Worker Advisors to get on some of the cases in a rather quick fashion. Again, this is something, no doubt, that we are going to enter into.

* (2040)

The Apprenticeship program and the transferring of it over to Education I think can be a positive thing depending on what the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) and how the Minister of Education incorporates it into the overall planning of post-secondary education and the type of consulting that is done with the industry at that point in time or at this point in time.

With those few remarks, Madam Chairperson, I am quite prepared to go into the Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: I would remind members of the committee that we will defer dealing with item

1.(a) Minister's Salary until all other line items of this department have been passed.

At this time, I would invite the minister's staff to enter the Chamber.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I would just look to my critics as to how they would like to handle discussion. Prior to this year, when the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was my critic and there was only one critic for the New Democratic Party for this particular department, we had a fairly free-ranging discussion, as long as we were able to accommodate staff. However, there is a breaking down of responsibilities this year. I look to their suggestion as to how they would feel most comfortable in handling this.

All I ask is some consideration, the ability to get the appropriate staff people down from the gallery to accommodate specific areas of questioning. Perhaps the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) would offer some suggestion.

Ms. Friesen: I think our preference is to go line by line in order to sort of accommodate the two or three of us.

Mr. Praznik: Sure, good.

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable minister wish to introduce his staff?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. I have with me my new deputy minister just recently appointed, but certainly no stranger I think to this House and certainly no stranger to my critic for the Workers Compensation Board. Of course, it is Mr. Tom Farrell. He is my previous assistant deputy minister, and he has just completed a stint of almost nine months at the Workers Compensation Board where he was acting chief executive officer.

I also have with me Mr. Jim Nykoluk, who is one of my assistant deputy ministers responsible for the Management Services and support division of the branch. They deal with a lot of our internal management issues and also provide us with our policy development area. From that branch, Mr. Jim Wood is here today as well.

Madam Chairperson: We are on item 1.(b) Executive Support, page 112 of the Estimates manual.

Ms. Friesen: I have some general questions here about overall policy review, but if the minister would prefer to answer them on the specific lines, we could look at that.

I wanted to ask first of all about legislative review. Could the minister tell me which acts are under legislative review at the moment and what stage the reports are at?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, there are a number of areas that are under legislative review currently. The first is The Construction Industry Wages Act, and well over a year ago we charged Professor Wally Fox-Decent and the Construction Industry Wages Boards with the task of doing a thorough public review of that legislation, including asking the question as to its necessity. They conducted public hearings across the province. They prepared after fairly lengthy discussions a report which we asked go to the Labour Management Review Committee.

I must admit to the member, I expected to have the report in my hands sometime early this winter, but the Labour Management Review Committee took a very long period of time to examine the recommendations and to debate them. I understand that we have just received in our office in the last week, if not a few days, the completed report with the analysis by the Labour Management Review Committee.

I must admit to her very candidly, I have not yet had an opportunity to even read it. So that is where that is in process. My intention, with that particular report, is to study it over the summer, in the next number of months and prepare some recommendations for my colleagues as to what we should be doing based on that report.

The other area in which we are into a major review is our public safety area. If I may, Madam Chair, distribute for members of the committee, a copy of our public review discussion paper. If we could perhaps have a Page distribute that, it may bring on some questions from the critics in this particular area.

This department is responsible for eight pieces of public safety legislation including The Amusements Act, The Elevator Act, The Buildings and Mobile Homes Act, The Power Engineers Act, The Electricians' Licence Act, The Fires Prevention Act, The Gas and Oil Burner Act, and The Steam and Pressure Plants Act.

All of these pieces of legislation were developed over the last hundred years. I think The Fires Prevention Act was really the genesis of what became the Department of Labour back in the

1880s. I believe we had the first prairie fire act, and of course with new technology we developed different legislation.

The reason I raise that is these pieces of public safety all deal with public safety areas but have different legislative schemes difficult to administer. What we have done, in fact, I must tell the honourable member, that this has been initiated within the department by our staff who are charged with administering these acts. Their suggestion to myself as minister and to our management team was that we conduct this kind of review of our public safety legislation with the goal to create one or two public safety statutes which would encompass in various sections these areas, but give us a common legislative scheme in which to operate and to basically update those pieces of legislation and give them greater administrative ease.

This paper, as I have said, was developed by our staff who will be out conducting public hearings of some sort to elicit the response of the public and interested groups, and then we hope to be developing a piece of legislation that at some point will come forward to this Legislature. It is a major undertaking.

The third area, perhaps two others, one of course is the retail holiday closing legislation which this department administers, but currently that legislative amendment is before the House under the name of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson).

The fourth area, of course, is one that we are going to have to come to grips with at some point, and that is The Remembrance Day Act, which has a number of very archaic provisions. I know my colleague the minister responsible for the Liquor Commission (Mrs. McIntosh) and myself have spoken about this. Perhaps because it only comes up once a year, it is not a pressing legislative matter. There are a lot of discrepancies, for example, you can go to a movie theatre on Remembrance Day, but you cannot rent a video. That is in need of review. It is not a pressing urgent matter but at some point will have to be dealt with.

Ms. Friesen: Are there any contemplated changes of The Employment Standards Act?

Mr. Praznik: None at this particular time. We have not charged Labour Management Review Committee to do any further review, although I

would say to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), there are some changes that I referred to a year ago that we would like to at some point at least seek advice on. There are a number of areas where that act is short.

* (2050)

I think she would even agree with me in these areas. For example, we do not have provision for sick time, et cetera, in our minimum standards.

So at some point in time, I think Labour Management Review will be asked to give us some recommendations on how we deal with some of those areas where there are voids in the act. I am sure she can appreciate anytime a Conservative government brings forward amendments to that act, even if they are jointly recommended by labour and management, my previous critic always made quite a political issue of it. So there is no particular rush, but that would be another area at some point that the committee should consider, but no immediate plans.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how often the Labour Management Review Committee has met this past year and what has been their basic agendas?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, I am advised that the steering committee of the Labour Management Review Committee meets about 10 times a year, the full committee about three, but there is some variation depending on the workload that I as minister send to them for consideration. The only issues that have been on their agenda that I have asked them to consider in a thorough way have been the report on The Construction Industry Wages Act. The year previous to that, they had a fairly busy year because of amendments that we made to The Labour Relations Act and The Workers Compensation Act the previous year.

As the member is aware, I have no legislation on the agenda in this session and, consequently, there was not a need for that kind of review.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chairperson, my last question in this area is a broad one. I am interested in hearing from the Minister of Labour how he justifies Bill 22 with the expected results of this particular section which helps to achieve greater fairness, equity and co-operation in the workplace.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, the member for Wolseley raises and makes I think a very valid argument. I will not disagree with her. Bill 22, certainly like its similar legislation in other provinces including Ontario, is not legislation that brings harmony in public sector bargaining. There is no doubt about that. I do not pretend that it does for one moment.

It was legislation that the cabinet of Manitoba, like the cabinet of Ontario and other provinces—and I am sure she would acknowledge that other governments of other political stripes have had to do similar things and have also seen a decline in the traditional harmony in public sector bargaining. I do not think any of us in government who have gotten into this type of legislation expected otherwise.

It was done, as I am sure the member can appreciate, because of a belief that that option of some constraint on public sector wages had to be undertaken for the greater good of the province. We can disagree whether that was true or not, but that is the premise behind it. We attempted to minimize the long-term effects on relationships and certainly benefits that had been won over a number of years, and that is why our particular model does not affect pensions, does not affect other benefits, et cetera. So we tried to minimize those. That, of course, does not necessarily lead to a decline in the debate in the public sector side, but it is weighing a greater good versus a difficulty in achieving those at the bargaining table.

I would point out to the member as well that one of the interesting observations in negotiations and labour management in a province like Manitoba—and I ask her not to hold me to my numbers exactly because they may have changed—but two or three years I recall a quick analysis of the Manitoba labour force being about 500,000 people—480,000 to 500,000—of whom about 150,000 or so are unionized, of which almost 100,000, and my numbers may be off a little bit, were in public sector unions.

The reason I raise that is, over the last 20 to 30 years in Canada the labour movement has come to be dominated, the growth has been in the public sector areas. Her comments about the decline of many of our traditional resource industries, certainly very valid, have helped change those numbers.

The public sector side is certainly the strongest in the labour movement today, is in a very different position from public sector unions, because public services cannot be shut down or close their doors or go out of business as private sector can. It makes a very different relationship between government as employer with their employees.

I do not think we as a country, quite frankly, on either side have fully come to grips with that. It has led to, I think, a great deal of frustration on both sides, much of it legitimate. We have a lot of mutual growth in that area to undertake. Not easy—I would agree with her wholeheartedly. It has not improved labour relations in the public sector. It has happened right across this country. I think it demonstrates the need for all of us in the public sector side to do some rethinking about relationships over the next number of years. I just hope we all have the opportunity to do that.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chairperson, I am not quite sure what the minister is saying by that statement. Is he saying that the growth of trade unionism is in the public sector and hence that is the reason for clamping down on trade unions? Is that the overall goal of what this bill is after?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, I would not say that at all, nor would I say that that is Mr. Rae's intention in Ontario or any other Premier, Mr. Wells or any other.

The only reason I raise that as an observation is that the growth in the last 20 years in the labour movement has been, and I think the member can acknowledge this, very heavy in the public sector side, for a lot of reasons—the growth of public services in Canada.

One looks at teachers for example, 30 years ago, very poorly paid, very difficult working conditions, organized, went a long way to improving those conditions for teachers, et cetera. They have become very, very strong unions for a host of reasons. On the other hand, with labour there has been a decline on the old heavy industrial, resource-based union membership. Technology, a host of reasons have reduced the number of employers.

Within the labour movement the public sector has become a very, very dominant part, and our whole psyche of labour relations, to some degree, has grown up in the private sector side. The difference between a private sector and public

sector, as I mentioned, is that a private sector, if you cannot reach an agreement or you reach a bad agreement that no one can live with, you can go out of business.

People have a precipice to look over. In the public sector side you do not have quite the same dynamics, because I have never seen a school system go out of business or a health system totally shut down. The dynamics are different. From my limited experience, on both sides how one handles that, and I take some responsibility for that as Labour minister as well, are not all that well developed. The growth in public sector unions has changed the dynamic, certainly a big part of that dynamic. All of us, on both sides of the table, I do not think really know how to come to grips with that. That is part of the underlying problem across the country.

Ms. Friesen: I might say in response that I think the reason you do not see the precipice there in the public sector is in fact there is an ethos of public service. It seems to me that that is what this government has undermined with Bill 22, that it is the public sector unions which are in fact one of the major groups in Canada today who are in defence of public service, in defence of that whole area of life where we have a basis of equality.

It is that basis of equality that this government and other Conservative governments across the country are gradually taking away from the people, and the government is turning its back on the people. It is, I think, one of the major reasons for the crisis in public confidence in this country. It is due to particular decisions, particular policies of Conservative governments.

I wanted to ask, particularly on Bill 22, the impact on this particular department. Has the minister decided which areas are essential services, where the six days are going to be taken from? Could he give us an account of how it will affect the department?

* (2100)

Mr. Praznik: I say to the member for Wolseley, I am quite enjoying this exchange between us. It is not often, in this Chamber at least, one gets to have this type of exchange, but I would say to her with all sincerity, her comments about Conservative governments, you know, the experience—and I do not say this to get into the usual rhetorical debate of Saskatchewan and Ontario, but I think the

problems facing the country have come to transcend, in my opinion at least, many of those ideological bases on which a lot of our politics has operated over the last number of years.

Even governments like Bob Rae's, who has stood for many of the principles that the member for Wolseley, I believe, sincerely holds dear to herself and stands for, has had to abandon those for reasons out of their control.

The same is true for members on this side of the House, that we have had to make decisions in budgets that we have not liked, that we have not wanted to make, but many of those factors that have forced Premiers like Bob Rae to make them have done the same to us.

So I only ask, and I know it is difficult to do in opposition, to be judged by similar standards as other provincial governments, and I think that is only, of course, fair.

The member asked the question as to how Bill 22 will affect us in our department. We will be taking the regular formula of seven Fridays in the summer, beginning this Friday of July 2nd, as well as the three days between Christmas and New Year's with respect to emergency or, as some have called it, essential services.

Those are things, of course, like having people on stand-by at the office of the Fire Commissioner, boiler inspectors, should an emergency arise, et cetera.

We will be operating on a similar model as we do on Easter Monday and other designated holidays with appropriate call-in staff and our emergency number service.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, just to continue on, I was interested in the minister's remarks with respect to Bill 22. He made reference to the private sector, and the private sector, if they negotiate on a bad agreement, that the business will go bankrupt or will have to close, or in fact go ahead and change the agreement.

Can the minister indicate if in fact he had the opportunity or what he has done in an attempt to change the agreement as opposed to legislate the change?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I think the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) provided some insight into an answer to the question from the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and it is a point that I think has to be

made. There is a very big difference between the private and public sector, although it may not appear to be on paper, but there certainly is in reality.

In discussions I have had with people at INCO, for example—my deputy minister has a great experience at INCO, having worked there for a number years. In discussions I have had with labour people from INCO, both sides ultimately look over a precipice which could be the loss of the operation, the company's investment, the workers' jobs and the future income that can be earned. Whereas the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) pointed out, there is a different view on the public sector side. Certainly you cannot necessarily close down all the provincial government. It is very, very hard to do, so the dynamic is very different.

I can tell the member that when we were in the process of building this year's budget and had decisions to make, we did hold a meeting with Mr. Olfert and representatives of the Manitoba Government Employees Union who are our largest union. We asked if they would be prepared to consider some framework for a renegotiation of the existing contract.

There were, of course, only four logical options with which to deal with a reduction in available funding for the year. One of course is renegotiation of a contract; two is a legislative rollback; three is to use our power under the collective agreement, which we have as managers, to lay off people, more people than whose jobs were eliminated this year; or fourthly, go to this type of reduced workweek model which has plenty of precedent in the private sector, certainly in many of the resource-based industries that are prevalent in this province.

We were not able to have all of those fully developed when we met with the MGEU. We asked them to consider on a fairly short time frame their willingness. They asked us the question at that time, if they were not prepared to do it what were our other options? We laid out what those three options were but not what our choice was.

A couple of weeks later, the so-called famous late-night call to Mr. Olfert, what I did tell him at that time, although we were unable to talk earlier in the day because of telephone tag, was that we had settled on an alternative option, which was the

reduced workweek plan. That is what we were announcing that was our option.

In fairness to Mr. Olfert, and I am not here to defend him today, there are a lot of difficulties for anyone in the labour movement, a union leader, to negotiate concessions. It is a very, very difficult thing to do. I recognize that. I think it would be very surprising to see a leader of a union negotiate those types of things, particularly if there were other options that an employer could assume that was relatively palatable like this reduced workweek, and they would not have to be necessarily part of that decision. It certainly gives them more maneuvering room politically.

So, from Mr. Olfert's perspective, I am not surprised at that particular direction, nor can one necessarily fault him for that. We all have options and we ultimately choose them.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I could probably go on that particular debate. No doubt we are going to have more debate on that particular bill as it continues to go through the legislative process, so what I am going to do is refer actually to the Supplementary Estimates, just ask some questions with respect to the organizational chart on page 9, and ask the minister with respect to a number of the different boards and advisory boards that are out there, in particular a couple of specific questions with respect to a couple of the boards, otherwise just to get some sort of a general idea in terms of meeting times and so forth and how often these advisory boards meet.

The first question I would ask is with respect to the Minimum Wage Board and to ask the minister if in fact that board has been meeting and if in fact there have been any recommendations coming forward or anything of that nature?

Mr. Praznik: We are in the process now of reconstituting that board to seek recommendations for appointment to it. Before this, of course, is the preliminary step to calling it to hold appropriate hearings to make recommendations to the government. So I am in the process of canvassing now the appropriate labour management community to seek recommendations to constitute the board.

I must just point out to the honourable member, of course, one of the difficulties, if you can call it a difficulty, with our current minimum wage formula in Manitoba is that some years ago we eliminated the

training or youth rate which, in effect, made our minimum wage the truly lowest one can pay an individual. It has to be viewed, I think, in that particular light, given that a number of provinces still have a youth differential or a training rate, et cetera.

Certainly, we have been at this current area. We have been about traditionally the middle of the pack. Other provinces have started to go through the consideration in keeping what has been the general policy of this government to be in that mid area. It is time, no doubt, to have another look at this particular issue, and that is why I am in the process of preparing to seek advice as to new members of the board.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, can the minister give the Chamber an indication in terms of when the last time that board was constituted and in fact had an official meeting?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, if my recollection serves me well, the board was reconstituted I believe in the spring of 1990, about this time, and made recommendations which I received shortly after my appointment as minister. It was one of the first issues with which I had to deal following my appointment in late September of 1990.

Mr. Lamoureux: I was not the Labour critic at that point in time, and I am wondering if the minister could indicate what the recommendations were that came out of that particular board at that time?

Mr. Praznik: We accepted the majority view to raise the minimum wage to the current level of \$5. There were also some recommendations for changes to some of the deductions that are allowed for meals and board, where that is applicable. I believe there was also a joint application recommendation not to reinstate a training wage. I am looking to my assistant deputy minister whose memory is a very good one. There was that recommendation not to reinstate a training wage or youth differential, which we accepted.

* (2110)

Mr. Lamoureux: What I would ask the minister, if it is at all possible, as opposed to going through each and every board or advisory board, to get some sort of an indication over the next few weeks from the office as to which board is in fact constituted, and some idea in terms of what has been going on with these boards, in particular if the

minister has been receiving recommendations of any sorts from boards, just to get an idea in terms of what type of direction the minister is going in a number of different areas, which I think would be very important. In particular, there are a couple of them, for example, the trade examination boards, which indicates that there are four boards that stem from that particular line, or how does that work?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, just to point out in context, unless a board has a statutory requirement to fulfill, then most of these boards are there to advise the minister in certain areas. Where I charge them for advice, one gets that back. As I have indicated to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), in a number of areas we have not been dealing with legislation, et cetera, so the charges have not been going to those boards. We use them as they are required. But we will undertake to get you some analysis of our boards and their meeting and, where it is in the public realm, certainly their agendas.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I am quite prepared to pass this particular line but just again to emphasize the importance. What I am really trying to get out of here is some sort of a sense in terms of usages of these advisory boards to get a better idea in terms of what the minister and the department are in fact up to.

Madam Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$337,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$73,200—pass.

2. Labour Programs (a) Management Services (1) Salaries.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chairperson, I am interested here in the research support to the Labour Management Review Committee, the three construction industry wages boards and the minimum wage board. Could the minister indicate what kind and how much research, what reports have been prepared in the past year?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, the support to the construction industry wages review committee came from the Support branch, our staff there, as required. As well, Mr. Jim McFarlane, who is the Director of the Employment Standards branch, did also provide advice and support to that branch, primarily advice and statistics, et cetera, as was necessary, given that Employment Standards is the enforcement body for The Construction

Industry Wages Act. So what was asked for was provided.

Ms. Friesen: Can I assume then that since the minimum wage board has not met that there has been no research done into the impact of the minimum wage freezing, stabilization—what the heck can I call it—and the fact that the minimum wage has not been raised in Manitoba for the past three years?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, first of all, there have been times in the history of the province where the wage has not gone up for two, two and a half years, three years. Some of them have been under previous administrations and some in fact during some periods of higher inflation. So I do not say that to be critical, but it is not just this period in which there has been a three-year wait.

As that board is constituted, the Research branch will provide the information that is requested, will staff that committee. I know from the last time we went through this process, there is a fair body of literature actually that may be of interest to the member on the effects of how one determines the minimum wage. I know there was an experiment in Quebec some years ago to pegging it to the average industrial wage.

If memory serves me correctly, because I have read parts of that report or at least a review of that report, there were some effects that were unexpected at the time in terms of ending up with a minimum wage that ended up in the loss of more jobs and the purpose that it was serving. So I am sure if one examines the issue, you will find that there is a balance to be maintained. We may in fact err from time to time on exactly where that balance is or the best way to obtain it, but I know that there is a fair body of that material and if the member would like access to it, I am sure that our staff can provide you with some of that material that is traditionally always available there to boards on considering this issue.

Ms. Friesen: The issue that I want to raise is the relationship of the minimum wage to the poverty line, the percentage of the poverty line that the minimum wage represents. That, I think, is what has been declining in Manitoba over a long period of time, but certainly three or four percentage points at least in the last couple of years. At a time when Manitoba is ranking at the bottom in the poverty charts, particularly in the inner city of Winnipeg,

particularly women, particularly single parent heads of families, and we know that a large proportion of the people who are at the minimum wage level, I think, it is over 80 percent are indeed women. But it seems to me that there is an issue here for the Department of Labour which has a Minimum Wage Board and which has not looked, apparently, at the minimum wage in the last three years.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, I note the point with respect to the number of people working at minimum wage levels. It is about two-thirds I am advised by my staff, but the point is still taken. It is a significant number of women who are in that area.

One factor that has to come into play, of course, is the—and I recognize it is a very complex area because one is balancing—by doing away with the differential, we have obviously brought that down somewhat. How much, I am not sure, but brought our ranking down somewhat for fear of losing positions for particularly high school students, because that is the minimum. Perhaps there is an argument to look at a pre-18 minimum wage. I do not know if one can do it.

There are a lot of pros and cons to it, but that has certainly affected the minimum wage rate in Manitoba to some degree. How much, I am not sure, but to some degree, because one has to take into account, or the board advising us has to take into account its effect on that particular segment since they do not have the luxury of a differential wage.

The member raises the issue of the poverty line. I have to say I certainly appreciate her comments with respect to the inner city of Winnipeg and other parts of the province where the cost of living certainly would be somewhat higher because of urban life as compared to some areas where there is a greater ability to earn nonmonetary income, whether it be a garden—just a simple issue—or other ways to supplement one's income and how the minimum wage affects the family earning, having only that source of income. It is certainly a difficult issue to deal with.

The issue though of a poverty line is one where there is some room for examination. I know our national statistics include within what is the poverty line a host of things, a host of costs that may not be reflective of the true cost of living in, say, a province like Manitoba or may include items that we may

debate as to whether or not they should be done in that calculation.

I think her point is a valid one that one has to take into account many of those issues and that will be part of what the Minimum Wage Board does do, and, again, trying to balance employment with what that minimum wage should be, and making the recommendations to government. We did accept last time the majority report of the board.

* (2120)

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister tell us what proportion of the Manitoba labour force is working at the minimum wage now and how has that changed since 1990?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, I cannot provide the exact comparison to the member for Wolseley. Data collection is the problem here.

I understand from our staff that in 1988 there was a labour force special survey in Manitoba that determined approximately 6 percent of wage earners were at the minimum wage level. The majority of those, a significant majority I understand—I do not have the exact breakdown—but certainly the majority were people who were either students in school or had left school or were just out of high school. So they were the younger age people. Another 2 to 3 percent approximately of the labour force were near the minimum wage. So again one has to look at what you are talking about in the labour force. That would include all students who have some sort of employment.

The staff advise me that there has not been, to their knowledge, another study with the same data. From their sense of the issue in some of the discussions that they have had, they feel that has not changed very much since 1988. I would imagine it is fairly significant across the country, or fairly similar across the country.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(a) Management Services (1) Salaries \$1,241,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$343,600—pass.

2.(b) Mechanical and Engineering (1) Salaries \$1,602,000.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister, and I believe this would be the line here, if he could give us some sort of an indication in terms of the building code and what stage the government is at.

Mr. Praznik: The member for Inkster raised some issues with respect to the building code and the delay in putting the code forward. I think, if I may put that in the context of a number of things that have happened—firstly, we have a number of codes that we administer: the building code, the Fire Code, a code for the mobile home, the plumbing code, electrical code. There are a number of them that usually go through together.

We had advisory boards for literally each one of those codes. The problem of course is they interwind in the construction of the building, so what we did in the last year and a half or so was reconstitute those boards into a building standards board with various subcommittees for the specialties, but one body to deal with the appropriate codes. They all deal with a building and we did not want to have things that were contradictory in each code, so we had to reconstitute our building advisory boards.

When I received the recommendations from the national committee—there is a whole process in developing these things in which one goes through the provincial committees up to the national committees, recommendations are made, they come back to the provincial level. At the time they were coming back to us, we were reconstituting our committee, so we put the codes to our new building standards board for their speedy review. Then they had to come to me as minister to take forward to cabinet committee and then to cabinet.

I do not know if we have copies of them here. If the member were to see the copies of the codes, the recommendations are very intricate and very involved. Perhaps someday the member for Inkster will have the opportunity to work in the cabinet process, but to take the codes forward with a host of minute recommendations and ask colleagues to pass them holus-bolus without reviewing them is, in any kind of cabinet that pays attention to what it is doing, almost an impossible feat.

So what I had to do is take the codes to cabinet committee with representatives of the Building Standards Board to explain the recommendations that were being sought. We had some very legitimate questions as a cabinet on specific items. More information had to be sought and then finally—and appreciate the length and size of some of these sets of amendments. So it took a fair length of time to establish a comfort level with those

of us who have the responsibility to adopt them into law, to gain a comfort level and to finally pass them. Then, of course, they had to go to printing and be distributed. So they are now in place, and we are beginning the process. I look to my staff. We are beginning the process now for the next round of consideration on the various codes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I guess what concerns me is the fact that there were a number of years, not months but years, before we saw anything of any worth coming out in terms of recommendations or whatever it might be. From what I understand, in 1988, I believe that is when the request from the province was to review, to make submissions, and then it came back to the province, after the submissions were made, for approval. Now some provinces had, from what I understand or what I was led to believe—and the minister will have to excuse me. I did not expect to be in the Labour Estimates this evening, so I did not get the opportunity to pull all my files on it.

I understood that there were some provinces that have had the building codes as recommended from the federal government in place well over a year and a half ago. Now we are under the process where the federal government is once again requesting for input on the current building codes for the next series of changes that could be implemented in terms of national standards. I am wondering if he might want to comment on the whole question of time.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, the process, first of all, it is not the federal government per se who has the regulatory responsibility. The National Research Council, which is an arm of the federal government, co-ordinates the administration and the development of a variety of codes on a national basis so that we are not having vastly different codes across the country. There is a movement on the part of all of the provinces to try to standardize our codes as much as possible with, of course, the necessary variances from province to province, particularly those that are based on climate.

Every five years, the process goes through a cycle. In 1988, I believe, was the last time the national committee chaired by the National Research Council came out with their recommendations for amendments, national amendments to the various provincial codes. There has never been a time in that period when we have not had a building code and a fire code

and a plumbing code and an electrical code and our various codes. We have had codes.

What we are talking about is making the amendments to them recommended by the national committee. The decision to do that ultimately rests with the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council in Manitoba. Our process took, I would think, about a year longer than any of us would have liked.

I should just put on the record for the member's benefit that the Manitoba Plumbing Code, in other words the amendments to our code, came into effect on November 19, 1992, 90 days after being passed and gazetted. The Manitoba Building Code came into force December 18, 1992, 90 days after being passed and gazetted, and the Manitoba Plumbing Code came into force March 5, 1993, 90 days after being passed and gazetted. I think the difference in times represents the process of taking those codes forward.

* (2130)

I share with the honourable member the fact that there were some particular recommendations which I as minister had some difficulty with, needed more information. There are some of those amendments we did not accept. It is a very lengthy process. I do not think one can expect a minister or a cabinet committee or a cabinet to deal with these issues in five, 10, 15 or 20 minutes. They have effects on a host of other things that we wanted more information on, and we wanted to deal with it in a very extensive way, which we did. It took longer than I expected.

There are a number of other parts in the process that took longer than I expect, the review by our Building Standards Board for one, but we have got those amendments into place and we are now starting the new process again for amendment. It will take some time, but I think we are going to be back on a little bit better schedule. So I was a little disappointed in the timing, but I do not think, ultimately, that it could have been helped.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, that is at least in part the reason why I was asking at the beginning about the organizational charts. I had received a call from an individual who had indicated some disappointment in terms of these—here you have one committee that is falling apart, whether it is the chair or whatever it might be, but the bottom line is that there were some things that needed to

be done and they were not being done. That is really where the concern comes from.

Hopefully, we see through the Building Standards committee that the government, that this particular minister, in terms of the amalgamation of different codes, in hopes that we will be able to expedite, because now I understand we are in fact under the 1993, because it is again that fifth year, and they are going to be looking for input on what impact those changes had.

The only other question, and again it is more one out of curiosity in terms of the number of inspectors that the government actually has that go out to do some of these building inspections, in particular, in the commercial area.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, just to make a comment to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), there are a lot of very, very good people who put a great deal of work into the development of recommendations to the codes. They become very, very enthusiastic about those recommendations.

I just say to him, my experience as Labour minister, we ultimately in cabinet and I as minister have a responsibility to judge those recommendations against the public interest. Although sometimes people are very enthusiastic about them, when they come under scrutiny, there are issues and questions that come up in the public interest point of view that have to be answered. Sometimes people who work on them become very enthusiastic with the expectation that they will be passed without question tomorrow because of the work they have done, and one always has to balance those interests.

So I appreciate his comment. I know some of the individuals who served on that have spoken to me and we have discussed that, but I think our new Building Standards Board will speed this process up somewhat in dealing with those kinds of questions that we have asked as ministers, the integration of codes and amendments and how they affect the overall scheme. By bringing those people together at the board, I think we will eliminate some of those difficulties in the future.

The number of inspectors we have in Mechanical and Engineering—our staff complement is, I believe, approximately 35 people altogether in the inspectorate.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, can the minister indicate, is this an increase or decrease in staff years?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, it is the same.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(b) Mechanical and Engineering (1) Salaries \$1,602,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$432,000—pass.

2.(c) Fire Prevention (1) Salaries \$1,768,700.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Chair, I just have a couple of questions dealing with Fire Prevention, and the minister can probably educate me on this aspect of his department. I know that there is, I believe, a member of my own community who is a member of the minister's staff. Yes, I believe he is up in the gallery. I thought that maybe he would be down here and have a chance to answer these questions, because I am uneducated on that aspect of it. Does the Fire Commissioner's office deal with aspects relating to the installation of fire alarms and detection equipment in either public housing facilities or in facilities such as apartment blocks? Is that the responsibility of this department?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. Madam Chair, to my colleague the member for Transcona, if I may introduce the famous Fire Commissioner for Manitoba, Mr. John Matheson, J.R. Matheson, who is a constituent of the member for Transcona. I think the member for Transcona will agree, Mr. Matheson has educated us both well on a lot of these subjects.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Matheson advises, in fact I know this already well as to the question the member asks, the responsibility for determining the regulation rests with the Fire Code. The requirements for safety alarms, fire alarms, smoke detectors, are established by the code, but the inspection and the enforcement of that rests with the local municipal fire department.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Acting Chairperson, then the minister's department is only responsible for the policy aspect of it then, and it is up to the municipalities to proceed and enforce that. The reason I ask this question is there were some concerns not that long ago where it was thought that certain apartment blocks were not upgrading their services, their fire detection equipment within those apartment blocks, potentially putting the residents of those blocks at risk.

I am just wondering what type of an enforcement mechanism we have to protect people that are living in older structures that do not have the upgraded equipment. Is there a time frame that is used to enforce the installation of this protection equipment and detection equipment, or is that left up to the municipality as well?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, very good questions, certainly important ones to people living in those facilities.

Firstly, the Fire Code is not a retroactive document. So if the particular building was meeting code at the time it was constructed, then as long as it continues to meet the code in force of that day, it is valid. It would be a legal non-conforming use with an upgraded code.

However, municipalities have the ability to pass upgrade bylaws. I am advised that the City of Winnipeg has such a bylaw in place which would require owners of those type of buildings that are not meeting code to upgrade them to meet the necessary Fire Code requirements.

One other point I may make to the member is that the Office of the Fire Commissioner does provide support to fire departments, whether they be the volunteer fire departments in rural Manitoba or the full-time fire departments in the city of Winnipeg with their inspections, et cetera, with providing advice, consultation.

If we receive a call from a resident, we will try to accommodate that as best as possible, either directing it, getting the local fire department involved to do the inspection. There has even been cases where, I think, we have gone out and inspected where there has been an unwillingness on behalf of the fire department to inspect or an inability to inspect.

* (2140)

Mr. Reid: I am sure that the Office of the Fire Commissioner provides various levels of support services. I believe, if I recall, the supplementary document, it indicates that there were training programs as well. Could the minister just give me a brief explanation of the types of training programs that the department would provide, and who they would be provided for? Would it be the various municipalities that do not have those skills available to them, say, outside of the major centres like Winnipeg and Brandon?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has hit upon my true love in the Department of Labour, the Fire Commissioner's office. We have a very intricate system of Mutual Aid support across the province, very unique in Canada, in fact.

We have 17 Mutual Aid Districts in southern Manitoba involving virtually all municipalities that have a fire department, and three in northern Manitoba that provide support to one another. We support our local fire departments through those Mutual Aid Districts.

We have provided up until recently a \$10,000 matching training grant to them. That was reduced by \$1,000 this year to \$9,000, in which they are able to bring in appropriate training people that we provide. We also provide training tapes and other supports where at the Mutual Aid District level they will train the trainer to then carry it back to the departments within their district.

We also provide, through the Manitoba Fire College, a host of training programs, Level I and Level II firefighter course being the most popular. I think the vast majority of firefighters in our province now have their Level I and are working towards their Level II.

When one appreciates that most of our firefighters outside of Brandon, Thompson, and Portage which has a mixed volunteer/full-time contingent, and Winnipeg are volunteers. We have, or are quickly becoming, probably one of the best-trained fire services in Canada. The credit for that really has to go to having the resources from the fire fund as opposed to taxpayers' money which is drawn on for other needs, and also the great work of the Mutual Aid system in our fire departments in encouraging that kind of training and our volunteer firefighters' undertaking.

Mr. Reid: I know time is short and I do not mean to belabour the point, I am just trying to educate myself a bit on the aspects of it. The minister mentioned a fire fund here that is used for the training of people from the various municipalities. I know the minister is anxious to answer these questions, and maybe I am playing right into his hands by asking these questions, but I would like to know how that fund is arrived at, where the monies come from and how it is dispersed.

Mr. Praznik: This is probably one of the most wonderful aspects of the Department of Labour in

being able to fund, on an ongoing basis, support to our fire services. We have a fire fund in Manitoba which was established quite a long time ago. I think we are unique in Canada in having this fund. There is a levy, currently of 1.25 percent, on all insurance premiums sold in the province. That money goes into a trust fund, the Fires Prevention Trust Fund which—imagine I am the trustee as minister. The costs of the Fire Commissioner's office, including the construction of and operation of the Manitoba Emergency Services Centre, are funded from that fund.

I would just point out to the member for Transcona—I think he will appreciate this comment—the levy was increased at one point to 2 percent to build up a reserve to build the fire college. We have brought it down to 1.25 percent, because we have a fair amount of dollars there. We are doing the expansion out of that fund, and we did not have the need or the call. At the time we did that, the insurance industry met with me. They would have wanted that reduced faster and to a lower amount. I put the question to them, if we reduce the levy would that result in a lower cost on insurance premiums to Manitoba residents, and they said no. So, quite frankly, this is a great fund that allows us to do wonderful support, financial support to the fire service in Manitoba without being part of the general revenue stream of the province.

Mr. Reid: In the training that the department provides for the various volunteer firefighting forces around the province, do we also teach those forces—because they may not always encounter the similar circumstances that firefighters might find themselves faced or confronted with in the larger population centres with respect to chemical blazes or blazes involving dangerous commodities. Do we also provide that level of training, expertise and education for those volunteer firefighters?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, the member has hit upon a very important part of the area we are now getting into in our training work for firefighters. We are getting into more and more the handling of dangerous goods.

I have attended some training sessions now with the use of propellants on fires, which is a phenomenon in the U.S., burning rocket fuel, for example, where you expect a blaze to take so long to burn and it flares up a fast burn where firefighters could be put at risk, common in arson situations, as I am sure the member will appreciate.

One particular area in which we are most proud, and I know our Fire Commissioner has scribbled a note to remind me of it, was Oakville this year, where our experience in handling the chemicals in the derailment was the first time in the world in which these chemicals had to be handled in that type of dangerous spill situation. Our Fire Commissioner's office—not only did we supervise that and were very much involved in that process, we used volunteer firefighters from a number of detachments which were circulated through the derailment over the weeks that it took place to give them the experience. But we also did a video tape of the procedure which is now going to be used for training purposes, not just in Manitoba, but we hope to be able to market it outside of our province to other fire departments and other fire services because it was such a unique process, developed right here in Manitoba by our firefighters.

Mr. Reid: Does the Fire Commissioner's office—this is my last question. I am not attempting to filibuster these Estimates. I know the minister is anxious and almost jumping out of his skin when I ask these questions. He seems to be quite excited. Obviously, it is a strong interest of his.

The minister mentioned arson cases. Does the Fire Commissioner's office investigate all of the arson cases, or suspected arson cases, and can he give me an idea of some kind of statistics that would be associated with the number of cases they would be asked to investigate and any kind of success rates they might have?

Mr. Praznik: A very, very important part of the training and the work that we do, in fact part of our ongoing training now for our firefighters across the province has been in arson investigation, because the first people on the site of a fire often are firefighters, so we want them to be cognizant of certain things that may suggest an arson situation for two reasons. Obviously, one, it helps in making a case later on for a charge and conviction, but more importantly, it alerts the firefighters to dangerous flammable, explosive product that may be used in the arson and be a dangerous situation for them as firefighters, so there is a dual purpose. We are expanding our work in that area, to develop that particular training, and it is an important part of what we do.

I believe in 1992 we had 383 arson investigations by our staff, of which 15, I believe, resulted in conviction. The most interesting number which I do

not have today is the number of those investigations where maybe not enough evidence was collected to result in a charge, but at the end of the day, no insurance claim was ever filed. So certainly that 1.25 percent levy on insurance premiums which funds this kind of training and this kind of support at the end of the day probably pays for itself well.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Svelnson): 2. Labour Programs (c) Fire Prevention (1) Salaries \$1,768,700—pass; (2) Other expenditures \$1,329,700—pass.

(d) Conciliation and Mediation Services (1) Salaries \$389,500.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Chair, I indicated at the beginning that I wanted to ask the minister about two of the long-standing strikes in Manitoba and ask him what efforts have been made toward conciliation and mediation. I am particularly concerned about the Northern Blower strike and the one at Trailmobile.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, to my critics, just on a House business issue, I understand that before ten o'clock we will have to seek permission to go back into the House to change, to provide for the ability to start a new segment of Estimates in here after ten o'clock, so we may want to do that about five to ten and then come back and resume our discussions on this department.

I look to my colleague who will have some discussions.

* (2150)

With respect to the questions from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) on those two particular labour disputes, both of them long-standing, difficult disputes obviously, in the case of Northern Blower, Chicago Blower as some call it, we have appointed, two weeks ago I signed the documentation appointing as a mediator Mr. Lou Plantje, so that particular dispute is into mediation.

I should point out to the member that whenever we have a long dispute or tough dispute, a very difficult one, there is a difference between conciliation and mediation. A practical concern is, mediation costs the department money in which we bring in an outside party and pay the bill, often several thousands of dollars. We usually like to have some sign from one of the two parties that there is a willingness to go into that process.

We received that kind of signal in the case of the Northern Blower situation, and I know I had some conversations with some of the parties. We determined that at this particular stage there now was a willingness. We of course sought a mediator that would be acceptable to both parties, and Mr. Lou Plantje was appointed and is currently in mediation. If I am correct, the work of Mr. Plantje, I do not think it is appropriate that I speak to this time.

In the case of Trailmobile, I have not yet been in a position to look at that option, but we certainly want to explore it with the parties as a vehicle to hopefully resolving that dispute.

I should point out to the member as well, another long-standing dispute in this province has been one between Building Products and the Teamsters Union. That particular issue has come back to conciliation.

In fact, our conciliation officer I believe got both parties back to the table. They are in very extensive conciliation at this particular time, and I hope that within the not too distant future we will be able to have some similar progress with Trailmobile.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, can I just follow some specific questions on that.

Mr. Plantje has now been appointed the mediator at Northern Blower. Could the minister tell us whether in fact both parties are at the table now and what the expected date is for a report?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, as I am sure the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) can appreciate, I must be careful in some of my comments here because there is a lot of sensitive information, and I would not want to jeopardize the work of the mediator.

I understand that discussions have begun with both parties to arrange the scenario for mediating this dispute, but there were some personal complications involving one of the parties to do with health. That is in the process of being dealt with. I do not really want to go into greater detail at a public forum because it does involve the private health of an individual involved in the dispute, but the process is underway.

As to the date for report, I can assure the member for Wolseley that I will continually extend the date for report as long as there is any hope in mediating that dispute. So although I do not want

to have it open-ended, I want to keep the pressure on. That will be amended to suit the circumstances of the party and the work of the mediator.

Ms. Friesen: Just to clarify then, I understand the minister is saying that they are not yet at the table.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, that is correct, and that has to do with the personal health of one of the parties.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister explain why it has taken it over a year to come to the process of mediation in this particular instance?

I am comparing it, for example, to a particular strike situation in the minister's own riding, Pine Falls, where I believe the minister took some personal interest and credit for bringing the two sides together. I am curious as to why that did not occur for over a year in this particular strike.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, as I have indicated earlier, one of the practices that I have followed in appointing mediators is to have some signal of willingness on the part of at least one party that starts that process.

In the case of the lockout situation in Pine Falls between Northern Stores and the Retail, Wholesale Union was I had a request from the bargaining unit. I had a similar request from the bargaining unit within the last three weeks to begin that process. So when I received that request and that signal then we get that sense that there is a willingness to proceed.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

I should point out to the member that all through these disputes, conciliation officers are appointed and are working with the parties. If I receive the advice from a conciliation officer that there is a chance to settle the issue with the mediator, we will also act on that.

But I rely as a minister on either that request from one of the two parties or from my own staff in Conciliation.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister then give us a sense of the history of the relationship between the conciliator and the Northern Blower situation? How many times did they meet? Was there no indication from that conciliator of any willingness to go to mediation?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair, if I may answer this question then we can make the appropriate changeover.

My recollection, there had been several meetings throughout that process, but in terms of a request to me or advice to me from my Conciliation staff, I did not have that recommendation to them. But I say very publicly, when we have these disputes if I have any sign from anywhere that there is a willingness to go that route, I am prepared to proceed with haste to accomplish that.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: If I may ask now, with the members' indulgence, if there is a willingness on the part of this committee to have Mr. Speaker take the Chair on some House business, particularly to ask if there is a willingness to waive the rules to allow a new section, if necessary, to begin in this Chamber after 10 p.m.?

Madam Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent of the House to interrupt the proceedings of this committee to deal with House business? [agreed]

* (2200)

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask if you could please canvass the House to see if there is a willingness to amend the rules with respect to the Committee of Supply to allow a second department to start in the Committee of Supply sitting in the Chamber tonight after 10 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On a point of clarification, I would ask the honourable deputy government House leader if it is the intent to continue on the assumption that that department's Estimates have concluded and to continue that department's Estimates?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, upon the completion of the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit another department of Estimates to convene in the Chamber after the conclusion of the Estimates of the Department of Labour, which therefore would be after 10 p.m. this evening?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

LABOUR

(continued)

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please reconvene. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Labour.

Would the minister's staff please re-enter the Chamber?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Chair, I wanted to ask the minister about the situation in Pine Falls and the lockout at Northern Stores. One of the issues in dispute there was the so-called continental workweek. I would like to hear the minister's perspective on that continental workweek in labour contracts in Manitoba and in labour standards in Manitoba. I understand that continental workweek is, in effect, still part of that contract, that it now has become something which can still be required of the people in that unit.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Madam Chair, I have not heard the use of that term in that context to Pine Falls, but I gather she is talking about the ability to open up on seven days a week, in essence, including Sunday. Just first of all, to put it in context, the specifics of the contract between the employees and their union in Pine Falls and their company really was not my business, as I am sure she can appreciate. My role as Labour minister in any dispute is to facilitate the process of the parties arriving at an agreement and not to become involved in the specific issues.

If the member is asking me the question in the broader context, which I believe she is, of the so-called continental workweek—and I gather that leads into the whole issue of Sunday shopping and how it fits in this province. If that is what her question is, I must tell her that as a member of this House I have very mixed feelings about the issue of Sunday shopping and working on Sunday—very, very mixed feelings about that, as I am sure many members have, many members on this side of the House, because there are very valid reasons for wanting to have one day in seven as a common day across our society for families and other activities. One thing that has happened on the other hand, of course, is we have had a growth in Sunday business.

Even under our old law in Manitoba, you could still open with four or less employees on a Sunday.

I know my own family business in St. Andrews, the fruit and vegetable stand, opened on Sunday to service its trade. I know in my own church in Garson, if you were to poll the people coming out of church about Sunday shopping, they would be opposed to it, but yet many can be found shortly thereafter in the local store doing a variety of shopping on Sunday.

It is a very complicated issue in that there are many changing factors of society in it. I think in many ways you can take either side and have a very firm argument to be made. I think all of us, whether we support expanded Sunday shopping legislation or not, maybe believe deep down that our society has given something up, no doubt, in going to losing that sort of common day when families and people could have a day off from the routine of their week.

We, as a society, may pay a price for that at some time, but there are certainly a host of factors in our society that have pushed forward that ability or that desire or that want to shop on Sundays. Most provinces in Canada have accommodated that now, including Manitoba, or is in the process of accommodating it.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chair, it was not my intention to get into the entire Sunday shopping issue at this point. My question was really directed at the minister and the issue of the requirement to work, the possible requirement of working seven days a week at regular pay, and whether that had been considered as a policy issue in the department.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, the policy considerations that this department became involved in, and myself as minister, was certainly advice to the Minister of Industry (Mr. Stefanson), who is the lead minister on the Sunday shopping legislation. The advice we gave, which was incorporated into the legislation, was for some protection of employees not wishing to work on Sundays to be incorporated into that legislation, which it was.

We fully recognize there are pressures and difficulties that can be brought to bear on employees. I fully recognize that. We are going to have some difficulties, no doubt, in monitoring and supporting that, and it is a problem. It is one of those issues that is not easily dealt with, no matter what one does, because you can have that same

pressure applied in a store that is opening now with less than four employees on a Sunday.

It is a delicate one. We would hope, and I know, as minister, during the trial period, whenever anyone would listen, I encouraged companies to respect that fully. Our department has encouraged companies to respect that thoroughly, even with the pain of prosecution, because given the number of people who are probably willing to put in those extra hours, it is hard to imagine, other than someone who would be just wanting to be very stubborn about it, where you could not find people who would be willing, voluntarily, to work those particular hours, but there are cases where the member's concern is going to be warranted, no doubt.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chair, in this trial period, have there been any complaints to the Department of Labour? What would be the procedures for a worker who felt under those kind of pressures?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, to date, I am informed that we have received no complaints that have been filed through the Employment Standards branch with respect to this provision. Of course, the worry that I share with the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) is that there are people who either are not aware of their rights or afraid to pursue them, but where we have complaints, we will certainly investigate, and upon the passage of this legislation, will have the ability to enter into appropriate prosecutions.

I say sincerely to the member for Wolseley, as Minister of Labour, in discussions I have had from major employers in this province who have spoken to me about the operation of this act, I have said very firmly that not only do they have to respect it, not only will we prosecute, but it is just bad business, particularly in a large establishment like a major grocery chain, not to look for employees who are willing to work those hours voluntarily. It is just bad management and bad business.

So I am hoping, between good sense and the power given to us under the act and the willingness of people to come forward if they are in that position, we will be able to at least reduce the valid concerns the member makes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister can give us some sort of a breakdown in terms of the

number of strikes and the involvement of the Department of Labour in those strikes.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, during 1993, as of June 28 of this year, we have had nine work stoppages, whether they be strikes or lockouts, going on in the province of Manitoba. I am not sure of the number of contracts that have come up in this particular time, but I would remind the honourable member that our Conciliation branch has about an 84, 85 percent success rate in settling disputes or bringing parties to a contract before a work stoppage.

Mr. Lamoureux: A while has passed now since the repeal of final offer selection. I am wondering if the minister can give us some sort of a cross-comparison of—and I am more interested in the private sector versus the public sector—in terms of the private sector, the type of days or strike days lost in those two time spans, if that is at all possible.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I will endeavour, if the member will permit me, to get that information for him, but there are some distortions in those statistics. One has to appreciate that in not all disputes was final offer selection sought after or would be sought after by the union or the company involved. One of the major time lost, days lost of work occurred when final offer selection still was an available tool, and that was the nurses' strike a couple of years ago. So that will show up in the statistics of days lost during the ability to use final offer selection.

* (2210)

The Manitoba Nurses' Union, I think, as a matter of policy, would not use that particular vehicle. That shows up on that side. If the member would look at the stats from that particular period of who used FOS when it was available, the vast majority of cases, some 90-plus percent of the cases, were used by basically only two unions in the province of Manitoba: the United Food and Commercial Workers, by far the largest union utilizing that device; and the Operating Engineers was the other.

So many of these disputes, although one could argue this particular method would have perhaps provided a vehicle, that is certainly true.

I would also point out to the member that one element of our final offer selection in Manitoba was it was not a two-sided tool. It was only literally a one-sided tool that either the company or the union

could request its use, but the employees ultimately had a veto on its use.

There is one particular case, from the history of that provision, where the company requested the use of FOS when the window became available. The employees vetoed its use, went into a strike, and then applied for its use in the secondary window.

I know during discussion which members had during the repeal process, the suggestion was thrown out that perhaps FOS could be amended to provide equal ability to either side to impose it, that if it was such a good tool, that either labour or management should have the ability to impose it on the other. That suggestion, regrettably, met with much disdain from many in the labour movement and its supporters in this House to make it a dual-sided tool. So there were some specific problems with it in Manitoba.

Whether or not it would have been the solution to these problems, I do not know. There are many disputes that we have had where the number of days lost did not get to the point where the window was available, the secondary window once you are into a work stoppage. So we will provide what data we have, and we will let the member sort that out as he may, but I just caution him that there are a lot of different issues that I think have to be worked through when looking at those statistics.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, if the minister could get those numbers—I am more interested in the commercial union. Mr. Christophe, who I know had used final offer selection on a number of occasions, but I do believe that there is—and the minister is fully aware of what the Liberal Party's position was on final offer selection in the terms of having it going to a review committee that would have looked at what I am hoping to be able to get out of the Minister of Labour, and that is some sort of a database established on which we could base in terms of how successful final offer selection is. Unfortunately, because there are so many other factors that are out there, all of them have to be taken into account. As I say, I would be especially interested in hearing in terms of the number of days lost and the unions that are going on strike now as opposed to when final offer selection—

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I certainly do not want to get into the whole debate again on final offer

selection today in the Estimates. If the members want to do that, I would be prepared to do it, but I just point out to the member for Inkster that there is still—and I have to be careful how I phrase this, because I am on record as making some comments about a very different environment in the public sector than in the private. At least in the private sector, there is a very different dynamic or very important dynamic in reaching agreement.

From my observation and the observations of those who advise me and my senior staff, the best agreement is one that is always negotiated and where people have come to an agreement. One of the difficulties with final offer selection—in fact, one long-time practitioner in the province in discussing this issue with me the other day said one of the flaws in our system was there was not a mediation process that could have brought all of the issues where there was agreement. Seal those up and then have a process dealing with the ones for which there were not agreement, and then you get back to the argument of you are looking at a whole package or part of a package and how do you make your compromises and trade-offs.

So I would still argue to the member that the best solution is one where the parties have worked through and put together their agreement, whether that be on their own with the help of independent advice, a conciliator or a mediator. If parties agree to put their issues, mutually agreed, to a third party to settle, I think that is great, but they have to mutually agree to do it.

Our Conciliation and Mediation Services, certainly in the experience I have seen in cases where we have appointed a mediator, they have helped parties work through the problems that have led to the impasse, which may have nothing to do with the final agreement that is cast on the table.

Again, my experience in some of these situations are that things are said, relationships break down, people are not listening to one another, and those issues a selector is not going to solve, but if they are not resolved, you are going to have lingering difficulties in the relationship. So there is more than just the final agreement that has to be dealt with; there is the relationship between the parties. Sometimes they break down over the strangest, funniest, odd reasons and have to be fixed. That has been my experience and the experience of many of our long-time experts in labour relations.

I would also point out to the member that the New Democratic Party government in Ontario, which has gone through a major change in their labour law, did not include FOS as one of their tools in their recent reform package, and they certainly had access to all of the data out of Manitoba and I believe requested it to be sent to them, the public information. So I think those who have been in labour relations for a long, long period of time appreciate some of the difficulties with that and there is no replacement ultimately in the private sector for the kind of bringing parties together and working at a host of problems.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Chair, this line of questioning I think is based upon concern about lost days and lost productivity in Manitoba. I wondered if the minister would care to put on record the number of lost days that there will be in Manitoba as a result of the lockout of Bill 22.

Mr. Praznik: There is no lockout with Bill 22.

Ms. Friesen: Perhaps the minister then would care to put on record the number of lost days of productivity as a result of Bill 22.

Mr. Praznik: I say to the member for Wolseley, we could try to endeavour upon a quick calculation of the total number of public service days lost, but I would suggest, she could have that question put to me in the Civil Service Estimates, when I have our staff there who have been dealing specifically with these questions. I see in the gallery Mr. Gerry Irving from our Labour Relations Division, and I think he will endeavour to prepare those numbers for that appropriate time. So if the member for Wolseley will wait till that time, we can give her a more exact number than I could put together for you today.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Chair, I would be delighted to raise it again.

Madam Chairperson: 2.(d) Conciliation and Mediation Services (1) Salaries \$389,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$97,300—pass.

2.(e) Pension Commission (1) Salaries.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, just to seek clarification from the minister with respect to Bill 22 and the impact on the pension it is going to have, can the minister indicate what the impact will be on the pension plan?

* (2220)

Mr. Praznik: For the member's information, the Pension Commission is the governing body. Our Civil Service Pension Superannuation Fund is one of the pensions that are governed by the Pension Commission. So the more specific information I can provide to him during the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission where we will deal with those specific plans.

In general, in most plans, the Teachers' Retirement Allowances is somewhat different because of the nature of the time in which teachers work. But in general, for example, for a civil servant, if their expected retirement date was, say, January 1, by working an additional number of days that they have lost in the reduced workweek, they would make up that time lost to their fund and consequently their pension would not be, I am advised, affected. That is one of the reasons we opted for this particular plan was the ability to make up that particular time on pensions.

Mr. Lamoureux: I know one of the things that is in this particular line is to protect the rights of individuals that do have pensions, and that is the primary reason why I had asked at this particular line as opposed to waiting for the Civil Service.

Madam Chairperson: 2.(e) Pension Commission (1) Salaries \$257,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$82,000—pass.

(f) Pay Equity Bureau (1) Salaries \$101,400.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, just one question and that is with reference to a while back, and this is again prior to myself being the Labour critic, there was concern that was raised about pay equity amongst the nurses in the health care field. I am wondering if the minister can give us some sort of indication in terms of what is being done with that particular piece of legislation that prevented the pay equity.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, the difficulty in that particular area was that The Pay Equity Act, which was passed by this Legislature prior to 1988 for, I imagine, good and valid reasons, identified only the largest 23 health care institutions for inclusion under the act. I believe the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) was the minister at the time, and I was not a member of this House. I gather it had to do with tackling the biggest areas first and dealing with the other institutions by way of their collective agreements. I gather that was the logic.

We were consequently left with that scenario where we—and so when pay equity was brought in for health care in the 23 institutions, it was provided there, negotiated in the next collective agreement for the non-23 institutions. Where we had a difficulty was the provision in the act brought in by the member for St. Johns when she was in cabinet that provided for a cap of, I think it was, 4 percent of payroll to be used for pay equity purposes for filling the gap. The Association of Health Care Professionals and a variety of unions took the province to court and obtained a judgment that said that if you basically were not going to deal with pay equity, then it did not really matter. But if you are going to deal with pay equity, you truly have to be equitable, and if it took 5 percent to address the wage gap you could not cap it at 4 percent.

So consequently where we had equality, we had to add an additional step, I think a fifth step, and for the information of members of the committee, Beth Stitchell is with us who is in charge with that particular bureau. So we had to add a step in concurrence with the court decision for the 23 institutions for which the law applied and used the method suggested in the bill to deal with the other institutions at the time of the collective agreement. I understand that was now done, that was part of the funding mandate to Manitoba Health Organizations, and has been included in the collective agreement with the Manitoba Nurses' Union.

Madam Chairperson: 2.(f) Pay Equity Bureau (1) Salaries \$101,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$87,600—pass.

2.(g) Manitoba Labour Board (1) Salaries \$512,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$309,300—pass.

2.(h) Workplace Safety and Health.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Chairperson, I am concerned with the change in policy in this area to move from inspections as a focus to move more to education. There are a number of concerns in that area with the number of hours or the time that the staff in that area are now devoting to inspections. I would say that education is important, but it should not occur at the expense of inspections, and I can see from the annual report of the previous year that there is quite a dramatic decline both in inspections and in improvement work orders. It seems to be that there is then going

to be less enforcement of Workplace Safety and Health regulations under the policy. So we would have some explanation, I hope, of what the rationale was for this kind of move.

I would also like some kind of indication of how this change is going to be evaluated and when that evaluation is going to happen.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I can appreciate the member for Radisson's concern in this area when one looks at the statistics. They suggest the kind of changes that she is suggesting by way of a question. The only correction I would make is that there has not been a change in policy to education from inspection. A very, very critical change in my opinion at least took place in the last year or so and that was our ability to gather specific information.

When I became minister in February of 1991 of the Workers Compensation Board, I had both our staff—Mr. Farrell was the assistant deputy minister responsible for that area—by the way Mr. Geoff Bawden, who is the director of this particular branch, has now joined us. I had these two gentlemen working with me as well as the Workers Compensation Board, and I asked a very legitimate question, how do you exchange information? Up until that point there was not the kind of specific information provided by the Workers Compensation Board to this branch that they could use in targeting their inspections. So virtually all of our inspections up to that point had been either complaint-driven or—just correct me if I go astray here—at random.

I think if you go back to the mid-'80s you will find that we did a lot of inspections and came up with a host of work orders that were very small work orders. The one that staff talked about the most is the literally thousands with respect to fire extinguishers.

Now, you have to remember at that particular time, the branch was very new. Jay Cowan, colleague of the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), was instrumental in establishing this branch, bringing in people. So it was very new, it was feeling itself out, it was getting itself organized.

After we were able to get these two groups together and establish the technological link, and I should just add as well, up to that point, what the Workplace Safety and Health division got was sort of generic data saying we had so-many-thousand back claims. We might get so-many-thousand

back claims in a specific industry, but we did not get the specific workplace where we had those back claims. So our staff did not have really the data in which to target their work.

Now, we have built a fairly good information link. We are still working with it. Our technical staff have been perfecting it, and since we have made that link, we are now able to get specific data on specific workplaces in the province where we are having the largest number of claims.

* (2230)

So our staff is now able to target their inspections into not only complaints, not only complaint-driven, and we also still do random inspections, but we are able to target the bulk of our work into those workplaces that have problems. So our emphasis has changed somewhat from just being the sort of the spot checkers out there and being driven by complaints, but an emphasis to being able now to identify workplaces that have very significant problems, going in and spending a fair bit of time with them, and not just writing an order but working with them to solve longer-term problems. So our success rate, I think, is improving. We have to develop criteria, I think, to establish that, how we are judged, but we are able to be more effective.

We are also working in a way to reduce risk. One of the areas in which our two parties have had a dispute is on the whole surcharge system under WCB. I think it is a legitimate dispute. I think there are legitimate concerns on both sides, but one thing that it did produce was a list of companies in the province of Manitoba that had very significant surcharges, did not even know they had problems, or did not want to admit they had problems. Because we had that data, we have now gone in and we have been able to work with them.

In one area, half of our claims at WCB are ergonomically related. They are strains and sprains. We now brought on staff new Workplace Safety and Health officers through the re-employment program who have experience in industrial design. So we are going to be able to offer more and more services to actually getting in, working with companies, reduce risk, improve their operations, and get the number of injuries in the workplace down.

So although on the surface it appears we may be doing less, in terms of inspection, we are now getting into where we have bigger problems in

trying to deal with them. I would think that the member would agree at the end of the day, although we still have to deal with complaints, we still have to do a spot-audit function across the province, because we now have better data than ever before. Because of technological improvements, we are able to target our work, and I think at the end of the day make a real dent on reducing accidents and hazards in the workplace.

Ms. Corliss: Madam Chair, I can appreciate the improvement to using information from the WCB to conduct inspections, but that does not deal with the question of the reasons for moving towards emphasizing the time that inspectors spend focusing more on education. It says in the explanatory notes on page 44 of last year's annual report under the improvement orders, the notation is: "The number of inspections decreased as more of the safety and health officers' activities were directed to proactive activities with specific industries, more sophisticated health related investigations and delivery of education programs to clients."

I notice that there is an increase in consultations, so there are two questions there. Are the education activities shown on this chart? I was assuming that they were client consultations, but specifically what I was asking before was, what was the rationale for moving in this direction, and is the minister not concerned that it is going to take away from the actual enforcement of Workplace Safety regulations?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I think it is very important to make the point that a lot of work that our officers are now doing with specific firms that have problems are not to just go in and write improvement order after improvement order, because in many cases, particularly when the problems are related to ergonomic issues, they may not be in breach of a regulation, but they still have injured workers, they still have claims at WCB, they still have a problem.

Our emphasis has been to work with them on an ongoing basis to improve the safety and health performance of that worksite. Sometimes that means a lot of additional training. Sometimes that means a lot of work with that particular company, with that particular workplace, a lot of work with the Workplace Safety and Health committees. Sometimes they are a big problem, sometimes small, but because we now know where we are

having accidents, we are having claims, we are having problems, we are able to target our people and go in and invest the time in that particular operation.

So the approach is somewhat different because of the information base, but the member may be of the impression that we are out doing seminars here and there to the general public or general groups. A lot of the work we are doing in that education training component are with companies, with worksites, with Workplace Safety and Health committees that have a problem. So every hour of time that we can invest in improving that over the long run, we are going to bring our accident and claim rate down.

I can appreciate her concern, but I think if one looks at where that time is being spent, you will see it is being spent, a good deal of it, with places that have problems in trying to improve that situation.

Ms. Cerilli: The other question I had asked was: Are there plans to evaluate the focus for this program, for the Workplace Safety and Health programs in this area? Can I have some indication of when there will be an evaluation and what that will encompass?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, the member raises a very good point, because I think whenever you are trying to judge the performance of any branch, you have to have some measure by which you are going to judge to see if you are achieving your results. From a fledgling Workplace Safety and Health division in the mid-80s, really the only criteria the branch had on which to judge itself were improvement orders written against the company: Was there a decline in the number of improvement orders written against a particular company? That still did not answer the question as to whether or not you had people being injured.

So, given our new information base, given our change in our ability to get in and do deeper work, we needed to change our evaluation system. We are in the process of doing that now, and the branch has developed a paper to basically provide those kind of objective standards. I would like to table it today. Do we have additional copies? No, okay. I will table it today, and I have one copy with me, but I will endeavour to have a copy made available to my appropriate critics. You may want to have a look at this now.

To go, as I have indicated, to that kind of standard where we are looking at, have we reduced the number of injuries in that workplace? We are moving towards that kind of goal, and time will tell if we are successful. I think we will be. I think we have seen some successes already. We still have a lot of work to do. There is no doubt about that.

Ms. Cerilli: I am sure the minister would appreciate that a lot of the problems we are looking at, especially in the changing workplace, are not just injury related, but they are illness related, which would have to do with chemicals, and would have to do with heating and lighting and various things that are more accumulative rather than injury.

I am not convinced as yet that the approach by moving away from inspections is going to address those kinds of concerns that we need to have people that appreciate, that are going to follow up and do the kind of consultation and education along with the inspections, that the inspections in those areas are particularly important, especially as we move into, unfortunately, workplaces using more and more chemicals, often chemicals that are not even tested before they are introduced into workplaces.

So it looks like the minister may have some comments on that. I was going to also ask, are the client consultations the kind of education that this department is now focusing more on, or are there other kinds of programs? I had raised questions in the House about the workshops or seminars that have been offered in the department that now charge fees, that where now there are fees charged. I was going to ask, with the client consultations, how are these consultations initiated?

* (2240)

Mr. Praznik: The member asks a host of questions, and I am going to try to sort through them as best as I am able to do.

Firstly, let me just indicate that several of the areas she has addressed in terms of long-term cumulative effect of chemicals, lighting, a host of things in the workplace, we do have WHMAS, for example, the Workplace Hazardous Information Materials System developed nationally that plays a role in that. We have spent a great deal of time on implementing and bringing the workplaces of

Manitoba up to snuff in that particular area with I think a fair bit of success.

What we have done, is our department has a chief occupational medical officer, Dr. Theodore Redekop. We also have a number of occupational hygienists, and they are working on an initiative currently to deal with many of these long-term issues, working across the province with workplaces as our information base grows, making people aware of these difficulties and trying to address them as best we are able.

We also work fairly closely with the Manitoba Federation of Labour Occupational Health Centre which is an excellent facility. We have a close working relationship with them. But our Occupational Health services currently is targeting a lot of high-risk industries, particularly lead in radiator shops, for example, silicosis in mines, and general occupational health issues.

As I indicated in my initial statement, we are in the process of establishing an Occupational Health nurse, I believe, who will be working with a lot of smaller employers, primarily like radiator shops and things and a limited number of employees who can develop the expertise to go in to deal with these types of issues.

So we are identifying industries. We are identifying the types of industries and workplaces where we see some of these long-term health problems today, and systematically working through the province with our staff to be able to ensure that we are minimizing or eliminating those types of risks. So I share that concern, a very valid one, and we are very fortunate to have some excellent people. I know in the area of occupational hygienists, they are like literally hen's teeth to recruit. I keep trying to literally steal some from the Manitoba Federation of Labour Occupational Health Centre. We had a number of postings in this department that we, quite frankly, were not able to fill after advertising nationally for them. So the ones we do have we try to hang on to. They work very well, they are excellent, and it is certainly an expanding field.

With that kind of support, we are trying to address many of those long-term issues that the member raises.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(h) Workplace Safety and Health (1) Salaries \$2,893,600.

Ms. Cerilli: Dealing with the other part of the question, how are the client consultations initiated?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, my apologies to the member. Again, a long question and a lot to answer.

About 60 percent of our inquiries or our consultations are initiated from the employee side, either through individuals or through Workplace Safety and Health committees who want us to come in and provide specific information or advice or assistance in solving a problem or identifying a problem.

The remainder is often initiated by the employer side, many of them as a result of us identifying that they are a worksite that has a very above-average claim rate at WCB and they have a problem. That is pointed out to them, and the request that, okay, come in and help us solve the problem and identify it. So it is about 60-65 percent employee-union initiated, about one-third employer initiated.

Ms. Cerilli: The minister mentioned the lack or the shortage of occupational hygienists, and it has been suggested to me that there is an opportunity here for employment creation. I do not know if Manitoba warrants having its own training program here, if that has been explored, or if there could be some other scheme for providing some kind of funding or recruitment and training for people to be trained outside the province and then have them guaranteed to come back and work in Manitoba. This is potentially a growing field, and I would like to think that we would start having more people trained so that they can work in Manitoba in this area.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I know a year or so ago I had a meeting with the association, here in Manitoba, of occupational hygienists. We both recognize there is a growing employment opportunity for people with these skills. Some come to the profession by way of specific training; others come from other related disciplines, such as nursing, for example, and are able to work into the profession.

There probably would not be enough demand to justify establishing necessarily a faculty or school. That is one of the problems in a province with only a million people, but we certainly are encouraging this particular profession. As minister, I would think that over the next couple of decades, it is certainly going to be a growth area in the medical profession.

We are very encouraging of it, whatever we can do to provide the experience. I know some of our training programs in the department that many avail themselves of, particularly those with prior medical training, nursing for example, assist in developing that body of knowledge which would allow them to be occupational hygienists.

So we help in the ways that we can, and certainly at some point it would be nice to have a school in Manitoba providing training for people across the country. It has some potential, no doubt.

Ms. Cerilli: I have had a few specific worksites brought to my attention that might require an inspection. I would just ask for three of them here, if the minister can tell me if they have had inspection, when the most recent inspection was. First would be Donwood School; second would be Palliser Furniture in Transcona; and the third, Abitibi-Price, the mill in Pine Falls.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I do not have the specific information, as I am sure the member can appreciate, on those specific worksites. We will endeavour to get that information for the member. But I can tell the member just with respect to those types of operations, both Palliser Furniture and Abitibi-Price have approached the department or been part of the development of our ergonomics program, because again this is one area that we have identified through our statistics where there is a problem on both sites, so they are working with our department in developing that now.

I know from personal experience that Abitibi-Price, the mill operation and the woodlands operation, have been very much involved in working with this department on regular safety issues. I know the woodlands division won a major safety award and was recommended jointly by the union and the company. The mill still has some way to go towards achieving that kind of award, but there has been a fair bit of work done by those operations with the unions there to improve safety.

* (2250)

In fact, in our whole forestry industry back some years ago, if I remember correctly, Manfor, as it was then known when it was owned by the Province of Manitoba, had one of the worst safety records in the province and in fact caused a huge increase in the rate in the forestry industry. It does not take too long to realize that Abitibi and Manfor were the main players in the forestry industry. In

fact, it was Abitibi who initiated the push with the department—I think that is prior to our even coming into government—to address safety issues in the forestry industry because the cost was just out of this world, and again, most of that at Manfor, which was then publicly owned.

In the area of Donwood School, there is a move afoot somewhat at this time to re-examine the application of our Workplace Safety and Health Act to the school environment in Manitoba. I know when you raise that issue, there is always the concern, well, you are taking it away. There are some legitimate concerns raised by schools about the application, because the act was not designed for the school environment. I am speaking not so much from safety issues but from administrative issues.

For example, is a teacher a worker or an employer? In relationship to the administration, they are a worker. In relationship to the students, what are they? How does the act apply to those various relationships? Who is representing the student, in essence, in Workplace Safety and Health committees?

So there is a desire to look at that, and I have charged the Workplace Safety and Health committee currently to look at those issues from the perspective not of weakening the application of safety and health legislation to schools, but certainly from an administrative point of view.

I know that members opposite may find that a little amusing on the role of the teacher, but certainly it is a very valid concern. Where do they fit in that process in their authority relationships?

So we are looking at revising somewhat our act specifically with relationship to schools. If recommendations come forward that are reasonable and make sense, there may be some amendments forthcoming. I look to the member for Wolseley. That may be one area which I omitted in her question about legislation, but that would only be if we could arrive at some recommendation that would make sense administratively.

So we will endeavour to get the member for Radisson the specifics on last inspections.

Ms. Cerilli: I do not want to belabour this too much, but I understood from looking through the act that both teachers and students were workers under the Workplace Safety and Health legislation.

I think that that makes sense to me anyway from my limited experience.

The reason I was asking about Donwood School in particular, the minister is probably aware, is that there is concern that that building is a sick building. I would question the minister, what is the recognition of sick building syndrome by the department and the government? How many sick buildings have been designated in Manitoba, or sick workplaces?

The minister mentioned that there was a protocol for indoor air quality. I would like some explanation of what other activities the department is undertaking in this area.

Mr. Praznik: Firstly, with respect to the worker teacher, yes, the act does define both as workers, but there are different relationships there that it is easy to make that definition that often break down. Those were questions that were legitimately raised. I asked the Workplace Safety and Health committee to review the issue and make recommendations to me.

With respect to sick buildings and sick building syndrome, there is no doubt that we have many buildings in which people work where at either entirely or at various times during the course of the day or week or year, there are a host of problems created by the air exchange system and heating system, fumes that are brought in that make them difficult places in which to live or work.

Our department, as I have indicated, has developed, along with the appropriate officials in Alberta, a protocol that we apply for indoor air quality. We do not maintain, as the member is asking, a list or a designation of sick buildings. One of the difficulties my staff advises me with determining what is a sick building is that there are so many factors that can affect air quality, some of them very temporary. Actually being able to track down and determine what the problem specifically is, or when the problem occurs, or can it be easily solved, is often a very difficult issue. I look to my staff for further comment on this, those who have to deal with this particular problem every day.

So we do not maintain a specific inventory, but there are cases where we have been asked to investigate. I understand that we have made recommendations in many cases to improve the air quality of a variety of buildings, and we will continue to do that. I would actually invite the member for

Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), because this is an area that gets into a fair bit of technical information, I would extend the invitation to her and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to meet with some of our staff who deal with this and to discuss the issue with them in greater detail. It is one that I do not think one can get into fully with a minister who is no expert and does not pretend to be. Certainly we do have some good expertise in our staff, and we would make that available to the member, particularly with respect to Donwood School, which I understand is in her constituency or near it.

So I make the offer. I hope she would accept it.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Chair, I feel like I am trying to rush along here, but I want to also ask in a similar vein if the Workplace Safety and Health division or other areas under the responsibility of the minister recognize environmental illness or chemical sensitivity syndrome as illnesses?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair, this is a particular area where our chief occupational medical officer and our occupational hygienist have been doing some work, and the branch advises me that they recognize, first of all, very clearly there are a host of chemicals that they refer to as sensitizers which can induce allergies or other reactions. In areas where we have been able to clearly identify those, and the literature and the material identifies the problem, we have been attempting to address it.

One example that my staff advises me of is in the case of body shops where spray paint is being applied. There are certain chemicals that can be used in those processes that can result in that reaction on the part of the people working around it. We have been working to awareness and eliminating that risk with the use of other chemicals, et cetera, in making people aware of those problems.

If the member is referring to some of the larger issues, because there is a whole body of reactions, and I am somewhat familiar, not in any technical way, but somewhat familiar with those kind of cases that come into the Workers Compensation Board, for example, that are hard to explain. As our body of knowledge is expanding as to the effect of various chemicals on the human body, we are certainly aware of those particular areas, that growth of medical knowledge, and will be wanting to, from a Workers Compensation Board

perspective and Workplace Safety and Health perspective, be following that body of knowledge as it grows worldwide to address those particular chemicals when they are in the worksite and to deal with and recognize those places where we have claims for illness as a result of exposure to them.

Currently, many are difficult to prove now, and that is part of the problem and part of the frustration on the part of the claimant. So the more knowledge that we can gather, the better it is to deal with those people who have become ill because of those chemicals. So I appreciate her concern, and it is one we are trying to address as best we can.

* (2300)

Ms. Cerilli: It is good that there is expertise in the department dealing with that area. I will follow up on that later. I just want to deal with another area that the minister referenced in his remarks, and that is the regulations for Workplace Safety and Health committees. This has been an area of considerable concern for a number of people, and I have asked questions before about the slow enforcement of these regulations that would do so much to empower and develop Workplace Safety and Health committees.

I will start off with just the general question, if the minister wants to update the committee as to the status of the regulations, when we are going to see these enforced, and some explanation of what has been happening to create the kind of amendments that we have seen. I have the draft with me that shows the kind of changes that the department is proposing.

I have a number of specific questions. I do not know if we will be able to get into those, but some of them just seem to be actually weakening the powers of these committees and weakening the onus on the department's requirement to act. So I think there are a number of concerns in this area.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I am not sure which draft the member for Radisson is working with, because I know there are a number floating around from members of the advisory committee. I am assuming what she is working with are the verbatim recommendations of the committee as opposed to a legal text that the Department of Justice would have. Not that that really matters all that much, but I just would caution the member, there is lots of information floating around.

First of all, there are three regulations that have come forward from the committee. The member is right in that they have taken a long time to come forward. The particular reg of which she speaks, the Workplace Safety and Health reg, has been in process, actually been worked on by the committee, I am advised, since about 1980, '82. So it has been around for a long time, as the member can appreciate. So I bear some responsibility with respect to it, but certainly there are lots of other ministers of different governments as well that have to accept some of that responsibility.

I want to deal firstly with the other two regulations that have come forward. One, of course, is the hearing conservation and noise control regulation. When this came forward to me about the same time, as part of this package, I had a difficulty with it. I share that with the members. Three came together as a package, and I just want to deal with them. I had some difficulty because the language of the regulation was virtually impossible for the layperson to deal with. So I asked if it could be reworked and updated into laypersons' language, which is being done and, I am advised, should be completed by the Department of Justice this fall.

The first aid regulation was also another one that needs some additional work, and we are, again, with the Department of Justice as it is being put in final form.

The committee reg, and that is the one the member is most interested in, presented a problem because of the way it was in fact put forward. The member talked about weakening the role of the department in relation to the committee. Yes, in terms of the initial proposal that was made by the committee, but no in terms of the current operation of the committee. What the initial recommendation did was require if a matter stayed, I believe, on an agenda of a Workplace Safety and Health committee for three meetings, I believe it was—two or three meetings—then by law, our department would have to send in an officer to deal with the issue.

Well, that sounds okay on the surface of it, but what that could do is, you could have a relatively minor issue. I do not mean to deprecate in any way from the importance of these issues, but we have to, the department has to be able to prioritize where it puts its effort. So you could have a relatively minor issue under that regulation require a member

of the department to go out and deal with it when there could be more important matters, quite frankly, on a priority list that have to be dealt with. So our staff, our management in that department, had some difficulty with this reg in essence dictating the priority with which they had to deal with matters. I think that is a legitimate concern.

I raised that with the Manitoba Federation of Labour Occupational Safety and Health Committee when I met with them last fall, and they acknowledged that, yes, that was a problem, that was not their intent. When we got down to brass tacks, their concern was, at least my recollection of it, if a matter remained on an agenda for a Workplace Safety and Health committee for a length of time, they wanted an ability to force the issue to resolution by having the ability to go to the Labour Board. There was also a bit of a problem from my department's point of view. They did not want to necessarily be the party that was involved in mediating in a dispute at the committee. I do not think it is fair to ask them to do that.

If it is a major issue that contravenes a regulation, we will inspect anyway, we will answer a complaint anyway. We will deal with it. So we are not necessarily talking about issues where there is a violation, we are talking about nonviolation issues—just to separate that because I think it is important to understand that. We talked about developing the reg that actually took out the step of that officer, which really met the concerns, the administrative concerns. They said, yes, that is really what we want to do. So we went about drafting another set of recommendations. They went to the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice reviewed them. I am being quite frank with the minister. The opinion we now get back from the Department of Justice is we do not have the authority under the statute to create that avenue of appeal.

The member's reaction was mine, when I learned this. What? We have worked on this for all these years, and now you tell us that we do not have the statutory authority to create that avenue of appeal? That was exactly my feeling about it.

But this is what we were advised by the Department of Justice, and one can appreciate that if it is ultra vires the statute, then passing that regulation is going to be thrown out the first time it is challenged, and it inevitably will be challenged.

So now the Workplace Safety and Health advisory committee has to struggle with this issue, and it may result in a recommendation to amend the act to provide the authority to do it, but I say this sincerely to the member, it is not for lack of—I as minister have not wanted to hold this regulation up. I have no interest in doing that. I think it raises a valid point, but there has been a host of issues that have come up in dealing with it that have to be sorted out, quite frankly that are beyond our control.

One thing I have learned out of this—and our department has I think bemused this problem over the years—is we have to change somewhat our process at the Workplace Safety and Health advisory committee. We have to involve the Department of Justice much earlier in the process. We all learn by these things.

Quite frankly, to my astonishment, no one over there has involved them in the process. Traditionally, the process that evolved did not involve Justice until the final end of it. So it is great to develop a regulation. It is great to deal with an issue, but if you find out at the end of the day you do not have the authority to pass the regulation, it is all for naught.

So we are consequently now looking at how we can change our process at the Workplace Safety and Health advisory committee to make sure we are dealing with Justice early in the process.

So yes, there is a concern. Yes, we have a bit of a mess here. Yes, we have to sort it out in the next while. It is my intention to do that, but I think the member would agree it is one of those things that happens in the process. A lot of good work has gone into this. We do not want to have that lost. We just have to figure out how we take it from here.

Ms. Corliss: Well, the number of changes that have come forward from the department seem to go beyond the kinds of concerns that the minister has just explained, such things as changing "shall" to "may," which is one of the concerns, but then, specifically, one section that strikes me is Section 12(5)(d) which seems to enable the Safety and Health officer to actually do nothing.

There are a couple of other sections similar to that which seem, as I said before, to take away the responsibility of the department or the incumbency on the department to act. I would ask, is that the section the minister was referring to?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I am not quite sure what the member is referring to. I think what she is talking about is how the Workplace Safety and Health Branch becomes involved in the process.

The original proposal was if a matter was unresolved after three meetings, a department official would have to come out and, in essence, try to mediate the dispute or deal with the particular issue. They would have to do that under the authority of that regulation. If they could not resolve it, it would then go to the Labour Board.

* (2310)

It comes back to the administrative issue that I was discussing with the member, and that is, it interfered or could interfere significantly with the ability of staff in the department to prioritize where they put their efforts because, again, we are not dealing with violations of regulation in this case. We are dealing with other issues, and there may be other matters that are, in the opinion of the staff, of greater priority, but yet they would have to, under the original draft, deal with this particular issue even if it was a very minor matter that just had been as a matter of course on the agenda for three meetings. So that was a problem.

The second concern on the part of our staff was they did not want to be the mediators, did not feel it was appropriate to be the mediators between disputes on this board. So when I met with the MFL, the impression I got from the Labour caucus in the committee, their main concern was not so much the involvement of the Workplace Safety and Health officer in the process. They had put the Workplace Safety and Health officer in as a first step, but what they were concerned about was the end of the process, which is the ability to go the Labour Board to settle this issue, a power they do not currently have.

So when we discussed that with them, the answer was simple: take out the department as a necessary step to get to the Labour Board. If we could solve the problem we would, but if it was not one where we should be, for whatever reason, then the committee could go directly to the Labour Board, which is what I think Labour intended this to do. So we went ahead. We drafted accordingly, and then Justice advised us that that end-step, which is really the goal I think of the Labour caucus on the committee was, in fact, ultra vires the

statute. So I thought I had it resolved, and it turned out I did not.

Ms. Cerilli: One of the other issues that has been raised with me is that inspectors are not at all times having a worker representative go with them when they do their inspections. That is something, as I understood it, that is required. Does the minister have any comments in that regard? Would there be some redoubling of effort to make sure that that regulation is followed and that worker representatives are involved in the actual inspection with the inspector?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I recognize very fully that this is an important issue with labour, and the member is right. I am advised by staff that it is our policy to conduct those inspections with a worker representative. If there are cases where that is not happening, I would very much appreciate if they were brought to the attention of our department, and we will pursue them.

Ms. Cerilli: One of the other concerns is with the confidentiality that is afforded a worker when they make a report or a request for an inspection. I have one letter from an individual who—it is obvious that somehow the information was disclosed, and they ended up losing their job. So again, I would ask if there is a policy that requires that there is protection for the worker that requests an inspection?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, this is a concern I share very much sincerely with the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). I myself have had calls at home from people in specific worksites who have raised problems, and I have asked staff, without revealing names, to do an inspection, to go in and check out those areas. I know how sensitive that can be, because there are workplaces in this province where that is viewed as an affront and reasons are found to get rid of the staff.

The comment I can make, and this is always the difficult part of it, is if someone figures out who made a complaint and decides to get that person fired and can find grounds to do it and all of those kinds of things, you are getting into a realm that is very difficult to find redress, particularly if they are let go for legitimate reasons in the process.

We tried very, very hard, me as minister, my senior staff and particularly our officers, to maintain as much confidentiality as we possibly can. For the system to work, that has to happen, but again, there are going to be circumstances where given

the size of workplaces and individuals, et cetera, I am sure there are people who have lost jobs who have not even complained but have been suspected of that, and they have lost jobs for—and I put in quotations—legitimate reasons that have not allowed for proper redress.

So I appreciate that concern, how we deal with that, and human nature being what it is, I do not know, but we are very cautious about that, and I share that concern with the member, and I know I can tell her that I have had cases where I have had to ask for inspections and we have done them with as great respect for confidentiality as possible. For the system to work, that has to happen, so we continually struggle with that.

Ms. Cerilli: I have a report that was prepared by the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba, an empirical examination of work-related accidents and illnesses in Winnipeg, and I am wondering if the department has had a chance to review the report and if there is any response that has been prepared.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair. My director of the department vaguely remembers the report. I think it was out a year ago, and if the member will indulge my staff, we would be prepared to give her a response to that or our response to the report in a week or so, if we could have some time to go back for information. My staff who have read the report and dealt with it—quite frankly, they deal with quite a few reports—do not have the specific information the member is requesting. We will endeavour to get it for her.

Ms. Cerilli: It raises a number of serious questions, particularly concerning the disproportionate reporting of illnesses and accidents between men and women, showing that men are much more likely to report, and that is something that is of concern. But I would just ask that the department make a commitment to not only do a review and supply me with that, but that they would outline what kind of action they are going to take based on this report.

There is one final question I will ask regarding regulating of hazardous substances. There is, I think, the awareness to move away from just monitoring levels of hazardous substances to developing an emphasis on prevention and developing some kind of procedures that are going to be regulated to ensure better prevention of

problems with hazardous substances. I would just ask the minister if it is a policy of the government that would agree with that—that it is the direction that we should be moving in terms of hazardous substances, and what is the department doing to fulfill that.

Mr. Praznik: I appreciate the request of the member for Radisson. It is more than just how do we handle this now and the responsibility under our Workplace Health Hazard Regulations putting an emphasis on employers and monitoring that. I think the member recognizes in her question the importance of continually being at the forefront of knowledge on chemicals and their toxicity and their hazard in the workplace.

Through Dr. Redekop, our chief occupational medical officer, through people in the department, we continually want to be part of the development and the gaining of that knowledge. We work with a number of national organizations now to keep our knowledge base as current as is possible.

* (2320)

We are committed to that, as is the member, and obviously there is still and will always be a great deal of work to do in this area. That is why I am very pleased that we at least have an occupational medical officer and hygienist on staff who can deal with this kind of information and plug us into that network and make the kind of recommendations that ultimately have to be made.

Madam Chairperson: 2.(h) Workplace Safety and Health (1) Salaries \$2,893,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$981,900—pass.

2.(j) Worker Advisor Office.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I have a few questions on the Worker Advisor. I will try to run through them fairly quickly if at all possible.

I had written to the minister recently with respect to the Worker Advisor Office because some concerns had been raised through my office by claimants that the Worker Advisor staff was being changed around with short or no notice to claimants, who found themselves having to face an appeal within a day or so and then having their advisor switched on them.

The minister did respond to me just as of June 24 saying that the problems have been ironed out. I would like to find out how they have been ironed out. Maybe the minister can indicate if there were

vacancies that had existed in the Worker Advisor Office. If so, how many, and was it a changeover in staff, staff quitting or reassigned? What were the reasons?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I very much appreciate this question and the concern the member raises, because I am not surprised at all he has had complaints. We have had complaints. We had a very rough year in this branch. We had a turnover of some three, four, five staff I believe in the course of the year. We had to recruit new staff to fill those positions.

As I am sure the member can appreciate, a Worker Advisor Office is a very demanding job. It is, as the member I am sure knows from his homework on Workers Compensation, if one's hair is not gray when you start, it gets gray very quickly. The same is true of those officers.

The work there is difficult and leads to a fairly high turnover. The difficulty, of course, if you have a block leave in one year, a number of people leave in one year, is recruiting new staff and training them and bringing them up to speed so that they are able to operate fairly effectively.

I am pleased to say that despite the vacancies we have managed to recruit, we now have two people who are lawyers by profession on staff, which I think augments the whole operation of that particular branch, the professionalism of that particular branch.

There was another very significant change. Within the context of some reorganization within the department, the member should be aware that the manager of that branch, Mr. Harvey Miller, left early in the year, summer or last fall, to take up a new position as director of the Apprenticeship and Training branch, which was then in the Department of Labour. Consequently, we had an acting director who then had to struggle with all of these vacancies.

We now have in place a manager of that office, one of our very experienced managerial staff in the department, and due to restructuring, Mr. Jim McFarlane, who joins us today, who is also in charge of the Employment Standards branch, also now has ultimate responsibility for the Worker Advisor Office.

When Jim took over that particular branch, we had a six-month wait for a worker advisor, which is totally unacceptable—totally unacceptable. I have

to give Mr. McFarlane full credit. He and the new manager did a survey of similar operations across Canada. They looked at the caseloads of other branches, found that we were really not well organized in the work we were doing, to some degree. We could organize better. We could take other initiatives in the way we handled our workload there, and consequently, within a very short period of time, has brought the waiting list down to virtually zero. I would say part of it is the organization of the workload.

Part of it also, and I am sure the member will understand this, is helping people help themselves to some degree, because as the member well knows, often a piece of information may be missing in a claim, a doctor's report, et cetera, and if one expects the worker advisor to handle every piece of paper flow, it can bog people down very quickly.

So there has been a bit of a change in emphasis in working with people to help them help themselves in the process, in essence, by saying, for example, listen, you need that doctor's report. You go and hound the doctor to get the report in, instead of me calling all the time. So it gives people some involvement in their file and, consequently, allows us to handle more workload.

So with those kinds of changes, the staffing complement, the new staff coming up to full ability, I think we are down to an acceptable level.

Mr. Reid: Well, I appreciate when the minister says he has his complement of staff there now. There were some serious problems with the Worker Advisor Office with respect to their caseload and what they were required to handle as far as claimants' cases were concerned.

Can the minister give me an idea of the total number of active worker advisors who are there, if that is the full complement, and can he give me an indication of what their caseload would be?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, one correction I would like to make is we have nine officers currently, and we have a secondment coming from the Civil Service Commission beginning in September. So we have in place arrangements for our full staff load of ten worker advisors, one to come and join us in September. We also have two support staff.

The caseload now is averaging about 85, and that would include from the most complicated case where the worker advisor is advocating on behalf of the individual at the Appeal Commission to the

case where a file has been opened to provide some advice and direction and assessment of a particular decision.

Mr. Reid: The minister makes references to varying degrees of difficulty of the cases. Can he give me an indication on whether or not a caseload of 85, as he has just indicated, is considered reasonable? What would be an acceptable work level for a worker advisor?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair, I am advised that the British Columbia record is about 125 cases per worker advisor. Alberta is about 100 per worker advisor, but again, one has to be careful of not comparing apples to oranges. A lot has to do with what degree of involvement the particular claimant is taking in their case, the complexity of the case, the amount of work that flows with that complexity. But we have looked at statistics for other worker advisor equivalents in other provinces and we are somewhat low on our caseload, and that is probably one of the reasons we have been able to get down from six months—one of the reasons—down to virtually no backlog at all as of today.

Mr. Reid: The minister neatly skated around the answer to that question by pawning it off onto other jurisdictions again. He has become somewhat of a master at that.

What my question was, what he would consider to be a reasonable caseload, considering—because it is my understanding in talking with some of the advisors that they are up to the top of their heads with work assignments in there, that they are having difficulty keeping up with even the more modest cases themselves, and that they feel in their own estimations that they are having difficulty doing justice to all of the claimants that come to them for assistance.

That is why I asked the minister what would be considered a reasonable level so we could provide a top quality level of service to claimants that require that.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, I did not in any way mean to skate around the issue. My apologies to the member for Transcona. Asking the minister what is the correct caseload is like asking what is the correct amount of rain we should get. It varies on so many circumstances.

I appreciate that many of the staff in that department have had a very difficult time of it over

the past year, and I am not quite sure when the member would have talked to staff most recently. I think the situation has improved—

An Honourable Member: Three weeks ago.

* (2330)

Mr. Praznik: Three weeks ago, yes. The situation is improving almost weekly, and as Mr. McFarlane advises me, with our new manager in place, with the coming on board of an additional staffperson in September, and of course with the increased efficiency of our new people as they gain experience in the system, I think you will see steady improvement and a greater comfort level on the part of our staff over the next number of months.

Mr. Reid: I hope that is the case and the people who perform the services, the minister's own staff who are obviously doing a good job, trying to do their best—and I have great respect for the people who are performing these services on behalf of the people of the province. It is a difficult task that they are undertaking, and I am sure that they are trying their best. I know in my dealings with the Worker Advisor Office, they have been very, very co-operative in providing a level of support.

Can the minister give me an indication—because there are, I believe, three Worker Advisor Offices in the province, if I am not mistaken, Winnipeg, Brandon and The Pas—on the staffing levels for those three offices?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair, the Brandon office has one worker advisor. The Pas office has one worker advisor. There will be eight worker advisors in Winnipeg and two support staff. That will be in September when our secondment comes into play with the additional staff here.

Mr. Reid: It is obvious by the population for the city of Winnipeg why the number of worker advisors would be here.

My concern here is Thompson, which is obviously a heavy industrialized centre for our province, being that it is more or less the heart of the mining industry for this province and for the North, as well.

Can the minister tell me the number of injuries that his records would show through the Worker Advisor Office? How many injuries would occur in the major centres that would have to be dealt with by worker advisors? Can he also give me an

indication why we do not have a Worker Advisor Office in Thompson, which is a major heavy industrialized centre for our province?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, one is able to sleep easy at night when you have good administration managing a branch. Mr. McFarlane advises me that in terms of caseload—first of all, our officer in The Pas also spends time in Thompson and other northern centres. I understand he has regularly scheduled time in Thompson. As we do in the North, often our staff do travel on a regular basis to meet demand in various centres.

The caseloads, I am advised, of both our rurally based officers are somewhat lower than the Winnipeg officers. I understand they run about 65 cases, which allows them to travel. [interjection] Well, the officer based in The Pas who also attends at Thompson would carry a caseload of about 65. The Brandon officer would have a caseload of about 65, as well, I am advised. Consequently, it gives them time to travel in that Westman region and that northern region to meet demand as it is available.

The Winnipeg office, of course, not only attracts the city of Winnipeg but easily services eastern Manitoba and part of central Manitoba and part of southcentral Manitoba. So the bulk of the province's population is serviced out of the Winnipeg office, probably 750,000, 800,000 people, whereas the two other offices service those other areas and have a reduced caseload. So there is some provision made for that.

Mr. Reid: The minister had indicated in discussions that I had with him that he had seconded the services of someone from the Worker Advisor Office. Is that also the case now? Does the minister have someone who is assisting him with his caseload, the concerns that are brought to his attention?

Mr. Praznik: It is somewhat correct, or is correct in that when I became Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, as the member can appreciate, one is inundated with inquiries from claimants, and also a host of letters, et cetera, that have to be done, and what I wanted to have as minister was a somewhat independent source dealing with the claim, not just get the inquiry answered at the Comp. Board, but somebody from outside the board, from the Worker Advisor Office,

who could say, yes, there is a problem there, or, no, there is not a problem.

At that time, Nancy Anderson, who is a barrister and solicitor by trade—they were not seconded to work directly in my office, but we made arrangements to second part of that time to deal with ministerial inquiries.

Nancy has carried that forward. She then went into the role of acting director for the last number of months, and I must admit, somewhat reluctantly, I think she did it as a favour to the department and did a fairly good job at it, a very good job at it, but had all of the staff turnover during that period which made it somewhat less.

Because of the increased efficiency of my own staff and their growth of knowledge in handling claims, and also I think a reduction in the inquiry level at my office, we have not needed that service to the same degree as we did in the past. So that also freed up some time.

Mr. Reid: I am not sure if I missed it there or not. The minister, did he indicate that there was an individual who was providing the same level of service to him and who that individual was?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Madam Chair, I have an individual from the Workers Compensation Board who handles all of the various inquiries in my work with the Workers Compensation Board in my office. That is Mr. Scott Ransome. That expertise has developed since he came into that position.

I know the member opposite is probably thinking, is that Brian Ransome's son? The answer is yes, but it is the Brian Ransome from Teulon, not the one who used to be a member of this House. [interjection] May have thought it though. Mr. Thampi from the Free Press thought enough about it to call Mr. Ransome to ask him today or within the last week.

But the point I make is our inquiry level, because of that person coming on and taking over the entire correspondence function and the inquiry function out of our office, including inquiries from MLAs, that reduced the demand my office had to make on the Worker Advisor Office.

I should share with the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), as well, prior to that happening, I was, I must admit, very frustrated in the service I was receiving from the board in terms of information. I remember one night where I had 25 letters they had drafted for me that I went through, and I think 24 of

them got sent back to the board because they were just inappropriately done and did not really answer the concerns, one of the reasons we are running plain language classes now over at the Workers Comp. Board.

So by putting that person in place, it freed up time on the Worker Advisor Office and also staff time at the Workers Compensation Board, so it has managed to solve that problem.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister give me an indication of where he would draw his work advisors from, and what type of training do we provide for them prior to their commencing their duties as worker advisors?

Mr. Praznik: The worker advisors have come from a variety of particular fields. Many of them though have had experience in the labour relations area. We have had a number of people who have come from the labour movement who worked in the workers compensation field for various unions, for example.

* (2340)

We have also had in the last number of years—and I have asked that we look to recruiting not entirely lawyers there, but a number of people with legal training and background simply to augment the skill level and provide a—

An Honourable Member: No-fault lawyers.

Mr. Praznik: I think the member is suggesting we develop a bar of people who can deal in the no-fault system, a very noble cause, no doubt, but we have recruited—I think we have two now on staff—people who have legal background. Nancy has since left this particular branch. She was our only person with legal training at one point.

We also have a number of people, two or three, who have moved to us off the redeployment list, whose positions had been eliminated in budget rounds, and came to us as part of that system. Some of them have some experience in advocacy or those types of skills.

We have also incorporated part of our training into the WCB training program so that our people are able to go there and learn first-hand the policies, procedures, legislation, et cetera, and also familiarize themselves with how the place works, because I am sure, as the member appreciates from his own caseload experience, often it is knowing where something has gone amiss or

astray in the system, that if you know the system, you can identify that particular spot and with very little effort often solve a person's problem when it is one of those kinds of problems where something has just bogged down, or the right information has not got to the right person in a timely way.

So we have integrated that training and, of course, we do some on our own in the Worker Advisor Office, and I think we are building a pretty highly skilled group of people.

Mr. Reid: The advisors, after they have received their training and, of course, have put some years in on the job as advocates on behalf of injured workers, on behalf of the claimants, have developed a skill level.

Does the minister have any difficulties with any of these advisors going out into the community and continuing to act as advocates on behalf of claimants and, in fact, lecturing on the workers compensation system?

Mr. Praznik: I am not quite sure as to the question of the member. I will try to answer it. There are maybe two points to his question.

Firstly, we have endeavoured to spend some of our time in working with various labour organizations, unions, the Injured Workers Association, for example, to use our people to teach, train the trainer or train the advocate to develop skill levels in other organizations that service claimants at the Workers Compensation Board so that they are able to do their job in representing, as best as possible, claimants before the board or the Appeal Commission.

We have no difficulty with our people taking on those roles in providing information.

If the member is suggesting that if a staff member leaves the Worker Advisor Office and goes in to advocate—the more people in my opinion who can learn and develop the skills to advocate and to deal with the process in a proper fashion—in other words, dealing with what is there and helping people push forward their cause or their claim—I am very much for it, and we have taken many initiatives to try to do that and expand the knowledge base of the advocacy community.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that. What I was referring to was advisors acting as advocates and people with knowledge of the workers compensation system who would go out in the evenings or on weekends and provide lectures to

people who do not have the same level of experience, in a way educating others to act as advocates and providing that training. So I thank the minister for giving his assurances that it is all right for these advisors to continue with those activities or move in that line.

Can the minister indicate—he mentioned two lawyers on staff. Are these lawyers doing legal advice to the worker advisors, or are they actually taking part in the worker advisors' caseload activity?

Mr. Praznik: The only caution I put, of course, is if one of our worker advisors goes out and does a seminar, et cetera, and then comes back without the approval of the administrator and asks to be paid for that time. That would not be appropriate, and I do not think the member is suggesting that. I do not want to leave that impression.

With respect to our two members who have legal training, I must be careful because they are not practising law, in that sense of the word, under The Law Society Act or breaching any of the conditions, to my knowledge, of that legislation. What we wanted to have on our staff in an advocacy role, which is perfectly legitimate, is people with legal training who have a better understanding, to some degree, of process, of administrative tribunals, of how to make an appropriate argument before the Appeal Commission.

They serve not only in carrying out a caseload as they are hired to do, but I think they augment the general skill level of the overall team in the Worker Advisor Office, just as having some people, of course, who come from unions and the labour movement who have an appreciation of some of that area and how some of those internal workings may help in advocating a claim is important, just as having some people who have some ability in Workplace Safety and Health issues and understanding of injury is important to the skill mix.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am going to also use this time just to ask one or two questions dealing with workers compensation. I did have the opportunity to have a tour of the facility a number of months ago.

One of the discussions that I entered into was the concern about the worker advisor and the role that the worker advisor was playing in workers compensation cases. One of the things that concerns me greatly, and I had made reference to

it in my opening remarks, is the constituent, if you will, who gives his MLA a call and asks him, is it in my best interest to get a lawyer in order to go through the appeal process, not necessarily wanting to say no with the idea that if you go through the process and you are unsuccessful, they say, well, maybe had I had a lawyer, the results could have been different.

I like to believe that the worker advisor and the advice that is given through the worker advisor to go through the appeal process is sufficient and will, in fact, get the individual through the process as quickly as possible, fairly, and if, in fact, the chances of overturning at the appeal stage and the percentage—and this is really what I want to get at, is the percentage, the success ratio of, let us say, lawyers versus the worker advisor cases going through the first appeal level and the final appeal level and if, in fact, the worker advisor or the minister is tracking what those percentages are.

Mr. Praznik: I am not sure if I caught all of the member's question. I believe he was asking about the success rates in the appeal level? Yes, getting the answer from our staff as we analyze that—first of all, it is always a difficult question. Should a person retain a lawyer to represent them? Can they have success with the worker advisor or the MLA or on their own?

I should tell him an interesting statistic that has always impressed me. In the United States, some of the states I am familiar with, they spend almost 15 percent of their workers compensation costs on legal fees. We spend 15 percent of our costs on medical services. They are spending almost 50 percent on medical services. We spend probably less than 1 percent on legal costs, including the Worker Advisor Office, if I am not mistaken.

* (2350)

So we do not really have in Manitoba, at least in Canada, a well-developed Workers Compensation bar as they do in the U.S. There has not been a need for one to date. I am not going to deprecate my colleagues in the legal profession. There are some lawyers who are very capable in representing people on Workers Comp. issues, but there is not the well-developed Workers Compensation bar that there certainly is in parts of the United States.

When we look at some of our success rates, and again, one has to be careful what you do with these statistics, but I am advised that there is a greater

success rate on behalf of claimants by the work advisor than there are for claimants represented by professionals, whether they be lawyers, doctors or other professionals advocating on their behalf, or on their own.

This is certainly at the review office level, and I think that carries forward to appeal. How high it is, I do not have the exact numbers with me, but again, it depends to some degree on the vetting of the cases.

That is one factor you have to take into account—if you have someone who knows what they are doing, and you seek their advice, and it turns out you really do not have a successful claim, that you may have a back injury, but there may not be sufficient medical evidence to support it being work-related. It may be due to a degenerative back problem, for example. You may be in pain, you may be suffering, you may not be able to work, but you may not have the evidence to relate it to a work-related injury.

You may still want to go for the claim because you need the income. With the bar, with another advocate or on your own, you may proceed and be unsuccessful, whereas a work advisor, when they assess the strength of your claim, may advise you that there is just not the evidence to proceed, and you may decide not to come forward. So that could affect the statistics, as well, in terms of the initial advice that you get.

So it is hard to say. I would not want to give advice to an individual. That is up to them to make that decision, but I think our Work Advisor Office has proven in the long run that it provides a very effective representation to injured workers.

What we are trying to do—I tell you this was not always the case there—we are trying to give our clientele as objective advice as possible on the strength of their claim. It is no use helping someone, advocating all the way through to appeal when you know from the evidence that they do not have enough evidence, or they just quite frankly do not have a claim that is going to go forward.

That was the case some years ago where we took people right forward and fought the case and we hashed it. Now we are trying to develop that professionalism where we can give people as objective advice as we possibly can.

So it is a good service and I would highly recommend it, but I would not want to advise a

person whether or not they should get legal counsel.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister indicate if, in fact, legal counsel is something that has been increased in terms of the number of presentations before the appeal board in particular, but also the first appeal level?

Mr. Praznik: I do not have that information, as I am sure the member would appreciate. That is a question staff from the Workers Compensation Board can best advise on. I would ask my staff assisting me today, perhaps we could ask the Compensation Board to get that information for the member.

The experience, as I say, in Manitoba and in Canada, generally, is we have not had the well-developed Workers Compensation bar they have had in the U.S. simply because the dollars have not been there or, quite frankly, the number of cases. I think the Workers Comp. appeal board deals with less than a thousand cases a year out of 50,000 claims. When you consider every one of those claims requires a number of decisions—is there an injury, was it related to the workplace, what degree of compensation is entitled—there are at least 150,000 decisions that have to be made every year. So what goes actually to appeal is a very, very small part of it.

So it is important to those thousand or less people who make appeals, but in the overall scheme of things, generally speaking, a lot of decisions are not challenged nor are there grounds on which to challenge them. So we do not really have the well-developed bar in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I understand there are a number of different factors in any appeal system, whether it is legal counsel, worker advisor, or someone decides to go through it on their own, but the overriding concern I have on this particular issue is that on the one hand, government does have worker advisors. I personally believe they are doing a good enough job, that individuals who are, in fact, injured workers, should feel relatively comfortable that these individuals will do an adequate job in bringing them through the process.

I believe that having—as a critic, I know anyway—some statistical information in terms of success ratios to be able to give them some sort of peace of mind that, in fact, you do not have to have

a lawyer—because it is a question that is quite often put to me. Whatever statistical information you can provide in terms of the appeal process would be much appreciated.

The only other question I would have with respect to workers compensation is some sort of an indication—and again, because of time constraints, if the minister can get back to me—just of the number of individuals, not from this fiscal year, but the previous fiscal year. There was a significant change in legislation that many argued—particularly different unions—would have an impact on the number of individuals applying for workers compensation.

What I am interested in is the actual number of individuals staking claim, new cases staking claim for workers compensation benefits prior to legislation and for one year after if that number is actually available.

Again, this is not something that I need shortly—over the summer or something of this nature. I am sure the minister is kept informed as to some of the results of legislation that has been brought forward, just to keep up to date on that particular issue.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, although this is not the appropriate place to deal with those issues, I will ask staff here to see if we can get that information from the Comp. Board for you. But I would say to the member that the number of accident claims are down, partially because of the recession and the reduced workforce, but also, too, because of our directed work with our Workplace, Safety and Health, where we have been able to reduce the number of accidents in the province, and a number of workplaces that have had traditionally a certain amount of accidents every year have considerably less because we have been putting the effort there.

So the numbers are down, but I do not think that is because people are not making the claims because they are injured and are afraid to. I think it is, quite frankly, because we are having less accidents in the province and a somewhat smaller workforce, those two factors.

Mr. Lamoureux: Finally, Madam Chairperson, we have another major concern that is brought up on an ongoing basis in workers compensation, and that is the fact that when individuals have gone to the adjudicator, the adjudicator has made a

decision that does not necessarily favour the injured worker or is not what the injured worker was wanting to hear, and then it sets off the first appeal process.

The number of individuals who are going into the appeal process, that percentage—and again, I have to work by percentage—has that, in fact, increased, the percentage, the number of individuals seeking the first appeal level?

Mr. Praznik: I do not have the exact numbers for the member, and again, it is not part of the Estimates of the Department of Labour, so I do not have staff with me to answer that, but my understanding is we are down on our applications for appeal—I would have to check on that for the member—and I think a lot of that has to do with the efforts we have been making to provide better information to people in making their decision, so that sometimes it is simply a matter of getting information.

I will be the first to admit that plain language was not something for which the board was noted, but through the efforts of Mr. Farrell during his tenure over there on our new board, we have made some major improvements in that area, and we have many more to make.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 12 a.m., what is the will of the committee?

Is there leave of the committee to pass the line by line? [agreed]

2.(j) Worker Advisor Office (1) Salaries \$508,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$99,100—pass.

2.(k) Employment Standards (1) Salaries \$1,447,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$280,900—pass.

2.(m) Labour Adjustment (1) Salaries \$285,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$423,900—(pass).

* (2400)

Resolution 11.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,474,400 for Labour, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

Item 3. Labour Special Programs (a) Payment of Wages Fund \$300,000—pass.

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$300,000 for Labour, Labour Special Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

At this time, I would ask that the minister's staff please leave the Chamber.

Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$20,600.

Ms. Friesen: I just want to put on the record that we have passed a number of lines with no questions or comments, and this is, for our part, not an indication of a lack of concern for these areas, but it is a question of time, and there are other departments whose Estimates must follow ours.

I do want to put on the record that we do have some concerns about The Employment Standards Act—and I will be putting that in writing to the minister and looking forward to his reply—some of the issues I raised in my opening remarks about labour adjustment and the decline in the amount of monies for labour adjustment at a time when unemployment is increasing rapidly in Manitoba and also our concerns for the vacation pay issue in the Labour special programs, the Payment of Wages Fund.

I think there are some serious and continuing concerns there, but in the interest of looking at other departments, we will simply pass them today without the particular questions on the record.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chairperson, very quickly, I appreciate the comments of the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and recognize what has happened.

It is a tradition in my department, I always make a presentation to critics. I believe the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) had one of these for his children a year ago. I do not think the member for Wolseley has young children, but I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) does. I would like to give him a farm and fire safety kit to test out on his children, one of the innovations of our department.

Madam Chairperson: 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$20,600—pass.

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$431,100 for Labour, Labour Executive, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Labour. As previously agreed, the hour being after 12 a.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): The hour being past 12 a.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 28, 1993

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