



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

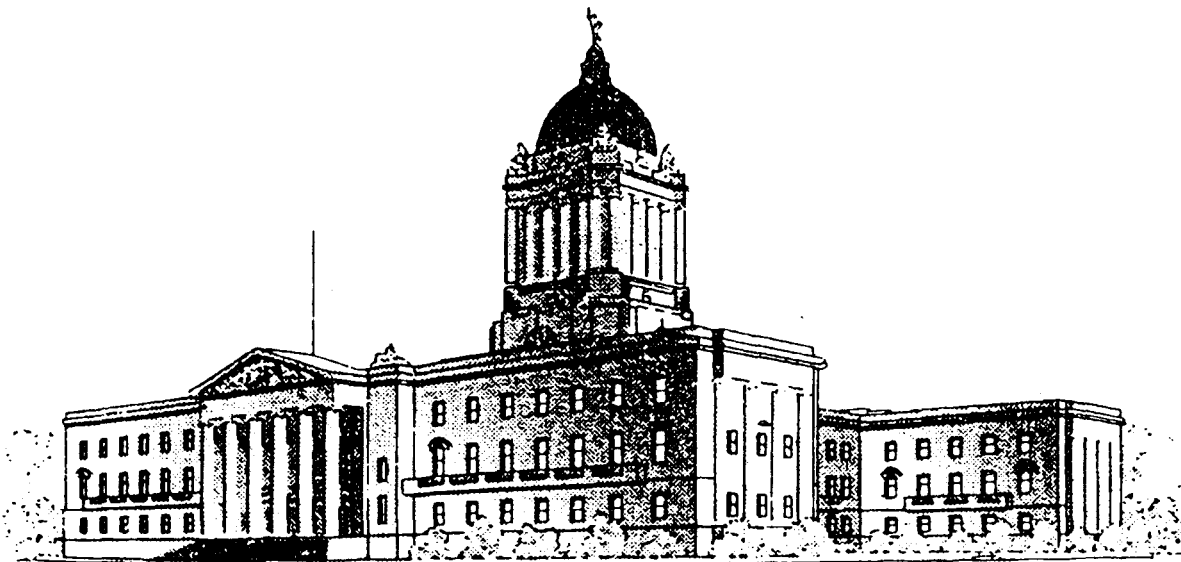
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 7, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the following report: the Annual Report for the Year 1999 for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today the 1999 Annual Report of the Crown Corporations Council and the March 31, 1999, Provincial Auditor's Audit of the Public Accounts.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today 45 retired Hydro employees under the direction of Mr. Kirk Gillespie. This group is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

Also in the gallery we have, from Major Pratt School, 14 Grade 9 students under the

direction of Mr. Mike Rolling. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Also, from Beaver Creek School, 23 kindergarten to Grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Cindy Cannon. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

First Nations Casinos Community Support

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the First Minister. In the Government's rush to fast-track First Nations casinos that will double the gambling in the province of Manitoba, the Premier has given First Nations communities and indeed all Manitobans mixed messages about what the requirements are for a non-aboriginal community's support before a casino can proceed. The Government-appointed selection committee of Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau yesterday made it clear, after a long-awaited news conference, that indeed support for communities like Headingley and Brandon is not necessary to proceed, yet the First Minister has said that it is necessary.

* (13:35)

My question for the First Minister is: Who are Manitobans to believe, who is telling the truth and how can the people of Headingley or Brandon or any other Manitoban trust the flip-flops that this government and this First Minister have made?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): It is obvious the Member opposite has still not read the report from the independent commission. I believe on page 20 of the report they filed, and was made

public within 24 hours on May 31, it says quite clearly that the matters were reviewed in accordance with the RFP in terms of the casinos that must be located on reserve lands. They said, and I quote: the mechanism to convert is complex. It involves various levels of government. It may involve public hearings and will require negotiation and completion of municipal development and service agreements as part of the process.

It is clearly dealt with as one of the conditions on page 20.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is a very serious issue for Manitobans, and I think this First Minister and this government have confused and have on the one hand said one thing and on another hand said another. It is not clear to Manitobans exactly what the position of this government is. Rolling River Chief Morris Shannacappo is now threatening legal action against the Government because it keeps changing its mind. It is clear that the Government is making this up as it goes along. It did not think it through, it did not have a plan, and now they are caught in a situation where they have created chaos among Manitobans, and certainly no one has clear answers from this government.

Legislation

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): The selection committee, on page 26, Mr. Speaker, said, and I quote: The Government of Manitoba may wish to consider amendments to the existing legislation to ensure that the implementation of the successful proposals is facilitated wherever possible and also to give legislative sanction to the comprehensive agreements concept, including the consequences of non-compliance with such agreement. Hopefully, by introducing legislation, Manitobans will clearly understand what the Government's position is and where it stands.

Will the First Minister commit today to introducing legislation?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On Monday when the Member opposite raised some questions about the technical participation of people, she

had obviously not read the report. She had not read page 26; she has obviously not read page 20. I would point out, on the RFP proposal call prepared by the Government, the selection committee is prepared to entertain proposals for facilities located on land being negotiated under the Treaty Land Entitlement. It is recognized that this process requires comprehensive approvals at local, municipal, provincial and federal levels, depending on the land selected, very clear rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was very direct, and the First Minister did not answer the question. Manitobans want to know. It is interesting to see that he quotes selectively from whatever page seems to suit his mood of the day, because obviously this government's position on this issue has changed on a daily basis. There is chaos throughout Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is obviously evident that the First Minister and his government have created chaos. They have created confusion among Manitobans, both the First Nations communities and other communities throughout our province.

* (13:40)

My question is very direct and is very simple. Will he, or will he not, pass legislation and make sure that that legislation is in place before there is any expansion of gambling in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there were allegations on Monday and over the weekend about, quote, political interference in the process. I think it is important to recognize that, in response to media questions about political interference at the press conference yesterday, from our perspective, Mr. Freedman says, neither of us would have participated if there was any political interference. The Government did not have to create an independent selection process. They could have negotiated directly with the AMC. Instead, they developed a more complicated and

ultimately a more fair process, which is reflected in the report which I have quoted from—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —and the Member opposite quotes page 26. It is reflected in the quote: The Government of Manitoba will undoubtedly consider the views of the public, as well as the views of the proponents and other stakeholders. It is right in the recommendations to the Government.

When asked by reporters—I believe it was on April 29 when members opposite were asking us to politically interfere in the selection of West St. Paul—I ultimately said to the media, and to members in this Chamber, that we would not interfere with the independent process, a fact that was confirmed yesterday by Mr. Freedman. I further said that we, ultimately the Cabinet and the Government, would be responsible, and we accepted that as part of the conditions. Thirdly, in answer to the question the Member posed, the Minister responsible yesterday answered the questions. It says we may wish to consider amendments. That is a recommendation made to us. "Consider" means that we are considering those recommendations, and we will respond accordingly.

First Nations Casinos Revenue Sharing Formula

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, when this NDP Government entered into the discussions to double gaming in this province, the intent appeared to be to encourage economic opportunity and growth.

My question is for the minister responsible for gambling. Does he support the formula that is recommended for revenue sharing?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not the minister for gambling. I am the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs responsible for the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, not the minister for gambling.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but be disappointed, on behalf of the people I am elected to represent, in that kind of avoidance of a question. This is an economic question for the people that I represent—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the questioner is dealing with a supplementary question, I understand, and *Beauchesne's* Citation 410 says supplementary questions require no preamble. I heard the Member continue quite a long preamble. Presumably, he is getting to a question.

Mr. Speaker, if you could raise that with the Member and direct him to pay attention to the rules. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was just referring to the quote made by the Honourable Minister. His question was clearly made to a minister responsible for, and be it gambling, be it gaming, be it whatever you want to call it, it is gambling, and it could be the same if we were posing a question to the Minister of Agriculture. We could say the minister responsible for farming. We could say the minister responsible for the fish in this province. So the Honourable Member, if he does not want to answer the question, just does not have to rise. He has that right.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please put his question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I will choose my words very carefully. I direct my question to the

First Minister (Mr. Doer). Does he support the revenue sharing of 27.5 percent to go to other First Nations who are not directly involved?

Mr. Lemieux: The Government of Manitoba and First Nations are very pleased to be walking down the same path and be working very, very closely in a co-operative manner with regard to this difficult issue.

There is a formula that was put forward by the AMC with regard to sharing with First Nations people. It should be known, as well as most Manitobans know, that First Nations people are willing to share with each other in a very, very equitable way and are very pleased in many, many other forms, not just gaming, to have been able to share with one another. Certainly, with regard to economics and certainly job creation and so on, they are hoping that this will be just another avenue and way they can share with each other.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very serious issue for some of the most disadvantaged people in this province. Does this First Minister support that the smaller portion, 27 percent, will be redistributed to the balance of the First Nations not participating in the gambling and casino construction, or would he consider revising that formula?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I know this is a novel concept to members opposite, but we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We decided, and Mr. Freedman confirms, to proceed on a process that worked with mutual respect with First Nations people to implement the Bostrom report. In other words, we worked together in a co-operative way with the First Nations before the selection process was begun to develop an equitable sharing arrangement, and we believe, at the end of the day, the most important part of it will be more Aboriginal people hired, trained and working in Manitoba.

First Nations Casinos Revenue Sharing Formula

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker; my question is to the First Minister,

who is ultimately responsible for gaming in this province. I would like to ask him, in the spirit of sharing among First Nations communities, an equitable sharing: Will he confirm to First Nations people who are being kept out of the loop, will he confirm to the people of Manitoba that in fact the reason why 70 percent is required for the host communities is that the management contracts take a full 30 percent of the take, more than provided for community sharing?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): No, first of all, Mr. Speaker. And, secondly, I would just like to point out, with regard to sharing, the selection committee stated in the RFP on page 9 that the selection committee will favour those proposed developments that will provide a catalyst for economic development, jobs and other additional benefits for First Nations as well as surrounding communities. We are certainly in favour of that.

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary is to the First Minister because we know that his Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs continually does not bring accurate information to this House. If it is not 30 percent, will the First Minister tell First Nations people who are out of the loop and the people of Manitoba exactly what percentage each of the management contracts draws? If it is not 30 percent, then you know what it is; tell us today.

* (13:50)

Mr. Lemieux: We know that is one of the conditions. I just want to comment that certainly, you know, the flavour of the questioning, certainly I do not want to call it fearmongering, but the flavour coming from members opposite with regard to a lot of their questions is certainly having a tone to that effect.

I just want to say once again, and repeat, to members opposite that First Nations people are extremely pleased in the province of Manitoba to be able to participate in something like this, to be able to have jobs in economic development, where you have in Saskatchewan, for example, a thousand people employed who were not employed before First Nations casinos.

Certainly, with members opposite, I wonder where they stand. Would they sooner see those people unemployed and not working?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the First Minister, who is responsible for gaming in this province, why he will not come clean. It is obvious from his minister's answers they know the percentage. What is the percentage taken by the management companies, which include Saskatchewan Indian Gaming who have been criticized by the Saskatchewan Auditor, by at least one American company? What percentage of this money is going to these management companies and being taken out of the hands of First Nations people?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there was a variety of different proposals, including a variety—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite are heckling from their seats. Rest assured one of the reasons why people from the Department of Justice were involved was to make sure that the process and the independence of the process resulted in very positive economic opportunity.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear the answer.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the strong recommendations to government is to deal—there will be a very significant amount of work to be done and conditions to be satisfied before any proposal is transformed into a functioning facility. Many obstacles must be overcome for a proposal to materialize as a gaming facility. We are aware that there were differential proposals, as I understand it, and I have not got all the details, on the management issue. But it will be our job in government to ensure that whatever agreement is reached as part of the condition for licensing is to make sure that those levels of licence-management fees are low so that the people will be the ultimate

benefactors. That is one of the conditions we accept, and I would suggest to members opposite that the numbers they are throwing out will not be the conditions that we will implement in government.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a new question?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, on a new question to the First Minister (Mr. Doer).

His minister said, very categorically, no. He implied that he knows what those numbers are. We know that First Nations communities out there, who are not in these proposals, are asking why they are only getting 27.5 percent of the share when the hosts are getting 70 percent, and there is only one logical reason: because they have to cover a large operating fee.

I ask the First Minister again to come clean. Is he aware? Can he at least tell the House what proposed operating fees the accepted proposals included? Please come clean to First Nations people. They are depending on you, Sir, to be honest.

* (13:55)

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yesterday I said in the House that this has taken a long time to come to this point in First Nations people's history in this province, the opportunity for them to engage in a true partnership with the Government. We are very proud of that because all 62 First Nations as represented by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs agreed to the process. They in fact came up with the revenue sharing formula which we are dealing with today: 70 percent for the host community; 27.5 percent for other First Nations communities that do not have the capacity or the ability to establish a casino in their community; and 2.5 percent for an addictions foundation.

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary question is again to the Premier (Mr. Doer), who is responsible for gaming in this province. We would like to know, out of that whopping 70 percent for the host community, how much is proposed to go to the operators, all of whom are from out of province. If the First Minister says a

small amount, will he commit to the House today what maximum percentage his government will allow?

Mr. Robinson: There is a lot of work to be done yet. There is an implementation committee. Yesterday I spoke about the process that needs to be completed. We came through the first step. Obviously, First Nations met with a lot of challenges. A lot of challenges lay ahead. The next step is to formulate an implementation committee in co-operation and in partnership with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Questions like that, questions of the unknown that are being posed to us are unfair.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Robinson: Very simply, Mr. Speaker, to finish the answer to the question. There is a lot of work to be done, and I would like to solicit the support of all honourable members in this House to give First Nations people an opportunity to prove some economic opportunities for themselves and the people in the time to come.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I again want to ask the First Minister (Mr. Doer), who today is hiding behind his ministers: On behalf of the thousands of First Nations people out there who are not part of the privileged few of the 70 percent, why, if you have already committed to a formula, will you not tell us today what restriction is on that amount so that we know that 30 percent, 40 percent of those profits are not leaving our province to foreign companies who are managing these facilities? Why will you not make that commitment today to those thousands of First Nations people who have exactly that question?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, it was well pointed out from the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs that not all First Nations are able to participate in the process because of financial reasons and other reasons. You know, the criteria that was in the RFP stated quite clearly what Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman used as their basis to make

their decisions. It states, if I might quote: the proponent is requested to provide short- and long-term details on how casino profits be distributed to First Nations communities in areas including, and so on. What it states here in the RFP is that it clearly states as one of the criteria when they were doing their evaluation that the First Nations people would benefit from this, not just those host First Nations.

First Nations Casinos Government Authority

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP Government prepares to double gambling in the province, the question of who has the final decision-making authority continues to be muddied. The *Free Press* reports today that according to native leaders, the NDP Government does not have the legal or moral authority to stop First Nations from building casinos in reluctant communities.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Northern Affairs who in the House yesterday said that his government has accepted in principle the recommendations of the selection committee: Does the Minister also accept his leader's statement that non-aboriginal communities have a virtual veto over any First Nations casino plan?

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite go back and forth. One moment they want us to interfere, the next they want to approve aboriginal casinos in their government. Then they want to reject it. They talk about formulas when they have negotiated VLT formulas at 80 percent. This is unique because it does share some of the revenues with other aboriginal First Nations communities.

The Harris government in Ontario has the Casino Rama. I think the management company is Carnival out of Florida. I think it is an important question. One of the conditions it has raised is the percentage of management fees. It is our responsibility to make sure that those are obviously appropriate and dependable to have the maximum amount of money flow to the people that are both directly in the host casino and in adjacent areas.

On the issue of public support, when the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs accepts the report, it says on page 26, the Government of Manitoba will undoubtedly consider the views of the public. We have accepted that.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The minister in charge of gambling has indicated that the Government is walking down the same path with Aboriginal people. Yet in the press today—

Mr. Speaker: Order, the Honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Yes, on a point of order. The Member has been gaining the assistance of members on this side asking for a question, yet he continues to have a supplementary question with an extensive preamble. Would you please direct him to the rules, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, it is a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please put his question.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, to the First Minister then: Does he agree with the minister in charge of gambling who has said that the Government is walking down the same path as the aboriginal community, yet they are reported in the press today as saying that this government does not have the legal or moral authority to stop First Nations from building casinos in reluctant communities?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would again refer members opposite to page 3, the selection committee on the RFP proposal, which is requests for proposals: The selection committee is prepared to entertain proposals for facilities located on land being negotiated under the Treaty Land Entitlement. It is recognized—now listen, please—that this process requires

comprehensive approval of local, municipal, provincial, federal levels depending on the land selected. Right up front.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the First Minister whether he has sought a legal opinion from government lawyers on whether the province has the legal authority to prevent the construction of any casinos in reluctant communities. If he has that legal position, would he table it?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau, two lawyers, who were part of the independent process. We used members of the Justice Department as technical advisers, something you objected to on Monday. On page 20, they say: It involves the mechanism to convert for casinos on reserve lands outside on off-reserve areas. The mechanism to convert is complex. It involves various levels of government. It may involve public hearings, and it will require the negotiation and completion of municipal development and service agreements as part of the process. Two lawyers giving us legal advice as part of the independent process.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I would like to remind all honourable members, when the Speaker stands, it is either to be seated or to give silence. I would just like to remind all honourable members.

First Nations Casinos Site Selection Criteria

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we are all wondering about just what the rules are in this casino-stakes game, when the Premier, on Monday, said Headingley now, in my view, does not meet the conditions—period, but yesterday the committee members, Ron Nadeau and Martin Freedman, indicated that the Swan Lake application for a casino in Headingley does in fact meet the criteria.

My question for the Premier: Given the importance he has assigned to the independent review process, will the Premier abide by the results of the independent review?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau did take the selection

criteria, part of which is on page 3. They came forward and I think wisely made some final recommendations and comments. They commented on the members of the public who had expressed their views after March 31.

They said: We have conducted our assessment within the scope. We have not therefore factored in publicly expressed views that were not included as part of any proposal, taking into account any such views as the role of government. The Government of Manitoba will undoubtedly consider the views of the public as well as the views of the proponents. That is what we have done.

Alternate Sites

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary to the Premier: I ask the Premier to further clarify the rules so that participants in this casino-stakes game can know whether a licence awarded to the Swan Lake First Nation for Headingley could be transferred by the band to another location.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I believe the report recommendations on sites—and again if I look at page 20, the site recommendations are very specific, and the specific sites must meet the conditions. So it is my interpretation of the report that it is very, very specific to the sites recommended by the independent committee.

Partnership Agreements

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My second supplementary to the Premier: Can a First Nation, which has been given approval to have a casino, partner with one of the First Nations or group of First Nations whose applications were not approved in proceeding with developing the casino from this point onward?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On the one hand, members opposite are asking us to follow the report, and on the other hand, with the recommendations in it, they are asking us to amend the report included on committees.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: The Member for Lac du Bonnet says he has no position, and I would suggest that is

the same kind of reversal of position he had on the frozen food experiment that he defended.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Opposition, my job here is to ask questions. The Premier's job is to answer. He should start doing his job.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: I believe the Member for Lac du Bonnet did not have a point of order. He does not have a consistent position. We on this side made a promise in the election campaign. We delivered it in an independent process, and we do have a position.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for River Heights, on the same point of order, if you have new information.

* (14:10)

Mr. Gerrard: My question was on casinos not frozen food unless the Premier is suggesting that he is going to feed people in casinos frozen food.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister to please conclude your comments, or have you concluded?

First Nations Casinos Market Assessments

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, and, oh, what a tangled web they weave. Page 18 of the request for proposals states, and I quote: A proposal must include a detailed market assessment highlighting the potential impact on any existing gaming facility within the same market. I believe that Assiniboia Downs qualifies as an existing gaming facility, since it is just down the road from Headingley.

Will the minister in charge of gambling immediately provide to the House a copy of the Swan Lake First Nations detailed market assessment so Manitobans can know the potential impact a casino in Headingley will have on Assiniboia Downs?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, just with regard to the question, and just maybe I want to correct something prior to answering the question. Members opposite, numerous of them, mentioned about doubling gaming and so on. If the members opposite would have read pages 19 and 20, the total amount of VLT machines or slot machines within those casinos, should all proponents be successful, amount to the same size as one casino, Regent or McPhillips. To me, that is not doubling the amount of gaming whatsoever. Do your math.

Also, with regard to point six on page eighteen, it was a criteria that the selection committee, Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman—two competent individuals, both lawyers and highly respected—certainly looked at, and I am sure they observed it prior to making their decision.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister of gambling one more time as to whether he can table the assessment, the detailed market assessment of the impact that this casino in Headingley will have on Assiniboia Downs.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. From what I heard from the question and I think an earlier question, there is no minister in the House with the title that the Member referred to.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Member referred to the minister responsible for gambling. It does not matter whether we refer to a minister responsible for gambling, a minister responsible for gaming, or

a minister responsible for farming, or a minister responsible for agriculture. It is up to government to choose who is going to answer that question. It is not up to us. We pose the question; they decide who is going to answer it.

A number of times we will pose the question to the First Minister (Mr. Doer), and the minister responsible for gambling will rise. Sometimes when we ask the question of the First Minister, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) or the minister responsible for agriculture will rise.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the minister for gambling or the minister responsible for gambling has been recognized over the past week and a half, two weeks, and has stood up and recognized that it was him responsible for gambling in this province, I do believe the question is in order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On the same point of order. I think it is really important in this session—I believe it is the 41st day of the session—that we have some respect for the rules and traditions of this House. It is appropriate for us to disagree with each other on any number of matters, but it is important that the rules of this House, whether it is not using individuals' names but rather the constituencies we represent, using properly the titles or roles and responsibility that people have properly—it goes beyond just the short-term politics that we are all sometimes engaged in. It is really the long-term respect we have for this Chamber, this Legislature, the people that have come before us and the people who go after us that we respect the rules of this House. I urge you to deal with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank all members for their advice. I will take this matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and consult the procedural authorities, and I will report back to the House.

* * *

Mr. Pitura: Since the Minister does not want to answer the first question I posed to him, I wonder if the minister responsible for gambling would offer what guarantees—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I took the "minister of gambling" under advisement. I would ask the Honourable Member to please refer to the Honourable Member with his title.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Laurendeau: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to listen very carefully to what the Member said. He clearly said: the "minister responsible for gambling." I am sure there is a minister responsible in this House for gambling, as there is a minister responsible for Agriculture, as there is a minister responsible for Justice, as there is a minister responsible for all the portfolios or all the events that occur in this province. So this is not the matter that you took under advisement earlier. The Member has clearly stated in his point that it was the minister responsible for gambling not the minister for gambling, the minister responsible for gambling.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, on the same point of order. The matter that you took under advisement was made clear to the House. It was the question of what is the proper way to address a minister in the House. The Member got up, and in the face of your advice that the matter was under advisement, continued on the same path that he was on earlier. What we are seeing now from the Opposition House Leader is an argument with you as the presiding officer of this Chamber. He knows that if he does not like the ruling, the proper thing, and in respect of the traditions and rules of this House, is to get up and take those procedures, not to get up and start to argue with the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order, what I heard the Member—what I heard—was when he referred to the Minister, he referred to the minister of gambling not responsible for gaming. That is what I heard, because I took the matter under advisement, and any matter that is taken

under advisement is not to be repeated until the Speaker has ruled on it. What I heard was "the minister of gambling." If I was in error, I would like to give the Honourable Member a chance to repeat his question.

* * *

Mr. Pitura: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat my question and try to make it clear. What guarantee can the minister who is responsible for gaming offer to Harvey Warner, President of the Manitoba Jockey Club, who referred to the news that Headingley was the No. 1 recommended site as absolutely devastating for Assiniboia Downs?

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for the question. I just want to answer by stating this: Yesterday, during the press conference, Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman mentioned that the selection committee met with the media, and while certainly they assured everyone of the rigorous and unbiased selection process—and the selection committee and the Government are bound by the confidentiality provisions within the RFP, proponents have been guaranteed confidentiality. Much of the information is financial and proprietary in regard to their business plans.

First Nations Casinos Tourism Potential

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): My question is to the Minister of Tourism. One of the objectives of the creation of First Nations casinos is to promote, by the development of multifunctional destination facilities, the concept of tourism. Although this is a worthy goal, I do have some concerns because, as it is quoted in the report: The success of any particular proposal will be pinned on the sustainable economic viability of the venture.

My question to the Minister responsible for Tourism is whether or not she can tell the House what criteria were used to determine the tourism potential of each of the proposed casinos. For example, did this involve an analysis of the number of out-of-province tourists who would potentially visit each of the proposed casino sites and contribute tourism dollars?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I can assure the Member opposite that there was at least one individual, Mr. Joe Keszi from the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, who assisted the selection committee with their work. But I also wanted to point out that on April 27, 1999, the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) assured the House that aboriginal casinos would be a boon to this province. He said: I think now there are some 600 tour buses a year that frequent our province, bringing people in from outside to participate in gaming, and it is estimated that at least another 400 potential tourist buses can come to our province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Minister, please conclude your remarks, your comments.

Ms. McGifford: So I do want to assure members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that Lotteries is confident that the province can draw at least 1000 tour buses to this province, and that will certainly provide individuals for McPhillips Street, for Regent Street and for other casinos that may be opening in the near future or the later future. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

50 Best-managed Companies

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate five Manitoba companies who have been named among Canada's 50 best-managed private companies. Ben Moss Jewellers, Peak of the Market, Dufresne Furniture & Appliances, Flynn Canada Ltd. and Wellington West Capital Inc. all made the 1999 top 50 list which is sponsored annually by Arthur Andersen, CIBC, PeopleSoft Canada and the *National Post*.

Manitoba was the best represented province in the list in terms of population size with 10 percent of the winners coming from a province that has 4 percent of Canadian population. Manitoba traditionally has a greater than

proportionate representation in the seven-year-old awards program, with the high point coming in 1997 when six companies made the grade. Financial performance was one of the key criteria the contest judges considered, and all five Manitoba winners have posted impressive revenue growth in recent years.

These companies built their success by acknowledging the changing economy, identifying opportunities and sometimes making difficult choices that are necessary to promote strong economic growth. It is unfortunate that our current government has failed to follow these companies' leads. This NDP Government should review how these companies attained their success, instead of offering Manitobans the opportunity to live in a province with the highest personal income taxes in all of Canada. Thank you.

Athletic Awards

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the Sport Manitoba award winners that were given their awards at a ceremony on April 7 of this year.

First of all, I want to recognize baton twirler, Terri Carter, who lives in the Radisson constituency in the Kildonan Meadows neighbourhood of Transcona. She received the Northwest Company David Eggertson Award for community service, recognizing a young athlete and their dedication to sport, education and community involvement.

This award was established in 1995, is named after the son of the Northwest Company vice-president and it is given annually, an award of a \$500 scholarship from the Northwest Company, to a superior athlete who excels in school as well as who is community-minded.

Terri Carter certainly fulfils this. She is the provincial baton champion in all four individual events and also competes nationally as a member of a dance group. She received the Governor General's Award upon graduation from TCI in Transcona and received awards and scholarships for excellence in mathematics, chemistry and physics. She also participated in a peer tutoring program in her school and coached baton in her

community. I want to also recognize that her mother and her grandmother joined her to receive the award at the Sport Manitoba event.

I also want to recognize Katie Iafolla who received the Female Youth Athlete of the Year. She is the 13th-ranked gymnast in the world, and also to golfer Ryan Horn of Dauphin who is the No. 1-ranked junior golfer in Canada.

I also want to conclude by recognizing Margaret Treble of field hockey who is the Sport Manitoba Volunteer Athlete of the Year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child Find Manitoba

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): On Friday, June 2, Child Find Manitoba hosted the 8th Annual Green Ribbon of Hope Dinner entitled Swing Into Spring on the grounds of the Green Gates Restaurant. I was pleased to attend this event in support of Child Find Manitoba's fundraising efforts.

During May, the Green Ribbon of Hope is recognized as a symbol to remember missing children, whether they are runaways or children abducted by a parent or stranger, and to seek their safe return. Last year 3500 children were reported missing in Manitoba.

The concept of the Green Ribbon of Hope was originated by the students and faculty of Holy Cross Secondary School in St. Catharines, Ontario following the abduction and subsequent murder of their friend, Kristen French. In memory of this tragedy, the students and faculty generously directed that their idea for the Green Ribbon be used exclusively as a symbol of hope by Child Find. Green is regarded as the colour of hope and epitomizes the quest for the safe return of all missing children. The Green Ribbon is a legacy from Kristen French. Proceeds generated by the Green Ribbon of Hope campaign will enable Child Find to continue their mandate of assisting in the search for missing children and the education of children and adults about child safety.

With information and education, we will continue to teach our children and ourselves

about the ever-changing comforts and complexities that make up the world in which we live today. At this time I would also like to acknowledge that Child Find Manitoba is recognizing their 15th anniversary this year, 15 years of keeping our community safer for children. Congratulations, Child Find, for all your good work. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Victor H. L. Wyatt School Concert

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): On June 1, 2000, I had the pleasure of attending the Victor H. L. Wyatt School final concert in the park. This event involved the Grade 7 band, the jazz band and the Grades 8 and 9 band. Under the dedicated direction of their music teacher, Angela Mantie. The students delighted their audience with such numbers as "The Flintstones Meet the Jetsons," "Grits and Gravy," "Rites of Tamburo" and "Portrait of a Clown."

This student concert was the last of a series of activities in 1999-2000, including a tour to Saskatchewan, performances at the Winnipeg Optimist Festival and the Brandon Jazz Festival, as well as their wonderful December 1 winter concert, which I attended.

Congratulations to the students for their excellent accomplishments this year. Bravo to Angela Mantie for her superb work with our young people. Special thanks goes to Doug Durnin, chair of the Band Booster Group and other parent volunteers who gave their time and energy to support the band program. Awards donated by the local St. Vital businesses, the parent council, the band booster group and myself were given to deserving students to attend the International Music Camp and the Summer Band Camp 2000.

Sylvia Madill, school principal, Jack Fraser, vice-principal, and the staff should be congratulated on the school's achievements, in this case, a quality music program for talented and hardworking students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

E. Coli Bacteria

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put several comments on the

record in terms of concerns about water quality and the situation with E. coli in the water supplies of Manitobans. On Monday, I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) whether any of the 40 000 tests that were done on wells in Manitoba each year were positive for E. coli. It was incredible at that point that the Minister did not know the answer and took the question under advisement.

But since then, we have learned through the press that some 10 percent of water samples from Manitoba have, indeed, been positive for E. coli. This is a situation which Dr. Kettner has indicated is a serious problem.

It is time, I believe, for the Minister to admit that he may have underestimated the level of concern that we should have over the E. coli and over the contamination of water in Manitoba. I would put as an example, each year there are known to be about 150 people in Manitoba who get sick from what is called hamburger disease, which is due to E. coli, and in Walkerton was due to the E. coli strain 157.

At this point, we have no evidence. We do not know if any of those 150 cases are due to water contamination, instead of what has been supposed, to date, the contamination of hamburger or meat supplies. There are important issues about the distribution of the E. coli 157, the strain of concern. It has been said to be present in some 30 percent of cattle elsewhere, and what percent here? Is it present in any Manitoba hogs or horses?

There are answers that are needed. I believe that the Minister should be standing up and presenting these.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FINANCE

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Finance.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 7.1.(a) Minister's Salary, on page 80 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: I say the Yeas have it.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 7.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,289,800 for Finance, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: This concludes the Estimates of Finance. We will now be moving on to the Estimates of Justice. We will take a brief recess now.

The Committee recessed at 2:48 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 3:02 p.m.

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Justice. Does the Honourable Minister of Justice have an opening statement?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am very pleased to present to the Committee the Estimates for the Department and for the Justice Initiatives Fund for the fiscal year 2000-2001.

An effective justice system is part of our government's overall strategy for building safe and stable neighbourhoods. Achieving this end will require action on all fronts including suppression, prevention and education. Other ministers will tell you more about and describe the Healthy Child Initiative, for example, and the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiatives that are focussing on prevention and education through proactive community-based programs.

The Justice Department's role has traditionally been geared more to the suppression element of the broader strategy. This government believes that there is room for a more balanced approach which combines suppression with crime prevention and support to communities.

Firm action with respect to serious and violent crime can be balanced with community-based justice approaches that, in appropriate cases, can both be more effective in eliminating offending behaviour and certainly more satisfying to the victim.

There is also room within the justice system to strike a more equitable balance between the rights of victims and those of the offender and to make the entire system more responsive to the wishes and needs of victims. It is high time for victims to have a voice in the justice system. In addition to pending legislation and the recently announced child-friendly courtroom, these Estimates provide additional resources to notify victims about the progress of their case and to assist them in collecting restitution awarded to them by the Court.

It is of great concern to us that there is significant overrepresentation of aboriginal persons in the Canadian justice system. I am pleased that our government was quick to establish the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission shortly after coming to office.

This independent body, funded out of Justice Estimates, is currently reviewing recommendations of the 1991 inquiry. They have tendered a first quarterly report containing recommendations that we are currently considering in conjunction with our programs. We expect a second report soon with additional advice regarding what can and should be implemented by our government.

The current Estimates provide significant additional resources for Justice in the next fiscal year. I look forward to discussing these in more detail where the critic chooses to pursue questioning.

For the convenience of the critic and other members, I will just touch on a few of the highlights, however, that I feel are important at this time. A new five-point plan to deal with organized crime and high-risk offenders was recently announced to the public. Funding for elements of this plan can be found within Prosecutions, Corrections and Public Safety sections of these Estimates.

Indeed, I think it was the bringing together of the different divisions within Justice that was one of the highlights and, I think, a very healthy part of the growth of the Department. Funding has also been provided to complete the ongoing external review of the Prosecutions function and to support ongoing development of computerized systems to support Prosecutions staff in carrying out their responsibilities.

Over \$3 million in additional funding has been provided in the Provincial Policing line. This includes funds to expand the use of the violent crime linkage analysis by class system, which tracks serial offenders across Canada. This funding also provides for contractual relations regarding RCMP salary and operating cost increases.

Policing budgets also contain funds to support community policing initiatives. For Corrections, substantial staffing and operating increases have been provided in response to continued high inmate populations and concerns about safety. In addition, two new secure housing units will open at the Headingley site this summer, as the members know. This will eliminate Manitoba's current reliance on the federal institution at Stony Mountain to house high-risk inmates.

Corrections will also receive additional funds to increase the level of culturally appropriate supports for aboriginal inmates and to enhance community-based alternative correctional approaches. In courts an offender debt collection program will be instituted to ensure that fines are more rigorously enforced.

The Maintenance Enforcement Program will also receive much needed additional resources to speed processing and enhance collection activity. This is a high priority for me as there is no debt more important, I believe, than the debt that is owed to children. Faster processing of family matters will also be made possible by the addition of a new case management officer position and by increased use of automation in the courtroom.

Eligibility guidelines for Legal Aid will be adjusted upwards to bring them more in line with the latest established poverty levels. Funding will also be provided for an increase in the tariff paid to Legal Aid lawyers. This will be the first such increase since 1987. Finally, as I mentioned, new funding has been provided for the operation of the AJIC while the Justice Initiatives Fund continues at its established level of \$1.5 million.

Now, Mr. Chair, I would like to take a few minutes to elaborate on the details of the new six-point child victim support initiative introduced by our government this last April and which I am confident will have the support of all members. It is an initiative that I am very excited about. We believe this initiative is the first of its kind in Canada.

It is based on the government's belief that the justice system has a special responsibility to

treat child victims of crime with sensitivity and compassion because they are the most vulnerable participants in the system. It also recognizes the need to take all the available steps to ensure that the safety of children is prioritized by providing the resources to allow for effective prosecutions, stronger prosecutions based on the strongest evidence that is available. The initiative represents an incremental approach, though. It is a work in progress. My department will assess which aspects of the initiative are most effective for broader application, in the future as well. As this initiative develops, families of child victims will know that this government is committed to support the child through each stage of the court process, and within the community, and to vigorously pursue successful prosecutions.

Here then are some of the ways in which our justice system in Manitoba will support the needs of child victims. The first point of our six-point initiative involves child-friendly waiting rooms and courtrooms. A specific, dedicated provincial courtroom in Winnipeg is now being renovated to be child-friendly with a number of features that will make the child feel as comfortable as possible. A new child-friendly waiting room is being created adjacent to the courtroom in Winnipeg. I understand that may now have been completed. The child will be able to play or be engaged in other age-appropriate activity, prior to testifying in court. In Brandon, a similar waiting room is in place. I saw that earlier this week, as part of the opening of the Brandon courthouse facility. In court locations throughout the province, child-friendly design will be pursued whenever facilities are renovated or there is an opportunity to make change as we progress.

* (15:10)

In the meantime, screens will be provided. I understand now, there is only one screen available. We will be looking at screens for all the regional courts. Court orders will be requested to enable the child to testify without the intimidation and discomfort of being in visual contact with an accused person. Of course, it remains with the court as to whether the order is granted. But it is now part of a checklist for Crown attorneys. The screens are

designed so that the witness will not see the accused person, though the accused will see the witness.

When it is consistent with obtaining the best evidence, Crown attorneys will apply to the court to be able to make use of closed-circuit television testimony to ensure that there is no visual contact with the accused person. I see the day, perhaps not too far in the future, where the child will not have to testify at all in the courtroom. They may be able to testify in a room—perhaps in a room, not even at the courthouse.

The use of videotape statements, wherever possible, will also provide further support to the child victim. Crown attorneys will also apply to the court to allow a child witness to testify with a support person present. Of course, the exclusion-of-witnesses rule will still apply. In the courtroom, seating adjacent to the child witness will be provided for such support persons.

An interesting development has been that we were able to arrange for courtroom screens, and some of the other child-friendly furnishings and equipment for the Winnipeg waiting room to be constructed by inmates from the Headingley Correctional Centre. This allows offenders, in one way, a small way, to give back to the community, consistent with coming to terms with the impacts of their own crimes on the general community.

The second point involves specialized and resource prosecutors and augmented legal training. Specialized prosecutors will be assigned to cases involving child victims in Winnipeg and Brandon from among the family violence prosecutors. A resource prosecutor from the family violence team will be made readily available to the Crown attorney in the event that a case cannot be assigned to a specialized prosecutor, for example, in the other regional offices. A two-day workshop training program on dealing with the child victim as a witness was provided recently. That is to augment ongoing legal education for Crown attorneys and child victim support service staff.

The third facet of our initiative is a swift justice initiative from which criminal cases involving child victims will be moved through the court system as quickly as possible. This is what the Department of Justice will do: The Crown attorney will vigorously pursue the earliest possible trial dates. In Winnipeg, a specially designated courtroom will increase the number of trial dates available. Cases will be dealt with in months, not years. Crown attorneys will strenuously oppose excessive requests for remand, unless they are necessary in the interest of the child victim or witness or to gather more evidence to support the charge. The same prosecutor will deal with each case through the full trial process, from start to finish, except in exceptional circumstances—for example, if someone is promoted or leaves, as two examples, and there may be others. Crown attorneys will consider in each case whether a preliminary inquiry is necessary or whether it is appropriate to have the case referred directly to trial, a way of direct indictment. Again, this does not say that every matter will proceed by direct indictment. But now, as a matter of policy, the Crown attorney must direct his or her mind to that question.

The Justice Department will support the initiatives of the Chief Judge and the Provincial Court to establish rules of court to enable cases to move more quickly through that court. It is interesting that, of all the three levels of court in Manitoba, the Provincial Court has no rules, and yet it deals with the vast majority of criminal cases. I understand from the Court that one of the reasons they are pursuing the issue of rules is to ensure timeliness. The Prosecutions, Courts, and Corrections divisions are developing a comprehensive, automated case management computer program that will be ready in the next few months. The program will refer all child victim cases to the child victim support service, and monitor these cases through the system.

We recognize, of course, that moving cases more quickly through the justice system depends on a number of factors and a number of different officials, some of which are, of course, the defence bar, some of which are the judiciary and some of which may be other officials, but where the Prosecutions branch can be a positive factor

in moving a case more quickly, it will attempt to pursue swift justice.

The fourth part of our initiative involves making every effort possible to support the child victim through the difficult court process. It will be paired with efforts to ensure that all evidence is as strong as possible and will contribute to a successful and effective prosecution. Throughout the province, police will have access to Crown attorneys for consultation on evidentiary issues even before the charges are laid to ensure that no time is lost and that the case is as strong as possible. Consultation will occur at regularly scheduled times for ongoing investigations and on an emergency basis for individual cases when required.

In preparing for every trial, Crown attorneys will consider the calling of expert evidence as a matter of course now, as a matter of policy, relating to the range of symptoms that may signify child abuse, the timing of the child's disclosure and the child's ability to recall dates or details of offences. Sometimes what at first may appear to be a shortcoming in the evidence of a key witness, in particular a child witness, can be readily explained by psychological or psychiatric evidence. Medical and psychological experts from the Child Protection Centre will be called upon in cases where an expert opinion is necessary. This early involvement of the centre will strengthen the Crown's case. The Crown will apply to have videotape statements used as evidence in court to give the child the greatest comfort level possible.

The fifth part of this initiative involves enhanced child victim support service. The child victim support service, formerly the Child Witness Support Program, in co-operation with the Crown attorney is responsible for identifying and alleviating children's fears in relation to the court experience, educating the child about the court process and assisting to develop coping skills for the child's appearance in court, providing short-term counselling and advocating for the child victim. A number of enhancements to the service are being introduced. The Crown attorney will refer each new case to the child victim support service within one week of receiving a file.

The child victim's parents or guardians, as long as they are not the ones charged with the offence, will be contacted to discuss all significant events during the case including delays, offers on plea disposition and resolutions. Children and families will be referred for counselling that will be supported through the compensation for victims of crime program or the victims' trust fund. An innovative program using hand puppets will help pre-school and early elementary children to feel more comfortable in asking questions of staff about the court process.

Crown attorneys will be vigilant in ensuring that they use age-appropriate, simple and plain language in the courtroom. A new program to train community volunteers as child advocates will be developed and phased in during the next year. The volunteer program will be a made-in-Manitoba program based on a model developed by the national Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, known as CASAA in the United States. A new toll-free number will be initiated to allow victims to access help.

The sixth aspect of this comprehensive program involves child-centred approaches to sentencing and enhanced probation protocol. In any situation where there is a dispute between the Crown attorney and the defence counsel on significant facts, the Crown attorney will call whatever evidence may be available on the issue at the sentencing hearing. The victim impact statement will now be requested for every case where there is a child victim to allow the victims to have a voice and to give information to the court about the impact of the crime. A Crown attorney will recommend to the court that pre-sentence reports be prepared for all child victim cases. The report will assess the ability of the offender to respond positively to interventions, such as treatment programs or counselling.

During the preparation of the pre-sentence report after a finding of guilt, the probation officer must assess and recommend to the court conditions that may be necessary to protect the child victim's safety and that of the broader community. The Crown attorney in every case will consider whether to submit to the court that the age of the victim is an aggravating factor that

should be acknowledged by the court at sentencing. Prioritization and swift prosecution of breaches of a condition of probation or a conditional sentence will be the result where the breach poses a risk to the child victim or other children. When a breach of a condition of probation or a conditional sentence is initiated by probation officers and there is potential for a child to be at risk, every effort will be made to notify the child and family.

Finally, the Crown attorney will consider in each case whether to apply to the court to have the offender designated as a dangerous offender and subject to indefinite incarceration based on the offender's history. With the additional resources we are placing into this unit, we will be able to significantly increase the number of cases where we will seek this previously seldom used dangerous offender designation. I believe that there is a great potential in using this section. I have long wondered why the justice system, generally, purposely sends a known dangerous offender back into the middle of a community when there is a whole history of convictions.

* (15:20)

Mr. Chair, as you have heard, the child victim support initiative is a co-ordinated plan to create a specialized criminal justice system response to crimes against children. Some parts of the initiative are new, while some are enhancements to existing practices. We expect it to cost up to \$100,000 during this budget year, and we believe that this will be an excellent investment for the people of Manitoba. When it comes to swift justice, I make the point that we have to move on ensuring swifter justice in Manitoba across the board, but there is no better place to start than with child victim cases.

Next, Mr. Chair, I would like to describe another strategy our government plans to implement to deal with the problem of organized crime and high-risk offenders. This is a multipoint plan again aimed at improving community safety by offering a co-ordinated and more comprehensive response to organized crime in particular. It incorporates justice programs and services with those offered by police agencies and community groups to

achieve our common goals through crime suppression and then, on the other hand, prevention and education. The key elements of this \$1.4-million strategy are first, a new Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit of Manitoba Justice. This unit will bring together probation officers and Crown attorneys, in particular, as a specialized team. It will expedite the arrest, prosecution and supervision of serious high-risk offenders, particularly those involved in gang violence or other activity that is risking the safety of the community, home invasions, and other violent crimes. The unit will comprise 21 specialized persons, including prosecutors, probation officers, victim and witness support persons, and administrative support.

The unit will work closely with police agencies, while preventative security officers—already in place in every correctional facility in Manitoba—will provide information about criminal organizations from correctional centres. The unit's mandate includes the swift prosecution of offences and breaches of probation, tracking of gang activity and sharing of information on organized crime.

These efforts will help build expertise among law enforcement officials and ensure the strongest evidence is gathered. Intensive surveillance and rehabilitation efforts will include daily contact, random curfew checks, weekly home visits and random urinalysis of offenders on probation depending on individual circumstances and histories. Enhanced victim and witness support will guard against intimidation and help with safety planning.

The Province will fund a three-member specialized provincial RCMP initiative referred to as the gang awareness unit that will monitor gang activities and co-ordinate suppression and prevention strategies with rural and northern communities. I know the RCMP have emphasized that this three-person unit is not to supplant the ongoing work of the RCMP throughout Manitoba in terms of the laying of charges and providing of evidence. This is to focus on prevention activities which include, of course, by their very nature, suppression activities.

A community mobilization conference, to be held next October, will bring together community representatives in a new partnership plan to develop co-ordinated, culturally appropriate rehabilitative services for offenders. In the meantime, the Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit will develop a range of community resources to meet the needs of high-risk offenders. That work is ongoing now. These resources include cultural programming and spiritual counselling, literacy, and secondary education programs. Indeed, I understand the literacy program is called a multigenerational approach where you have children actually working on literacy with their parents, I guess, in a sense, the children teaching literacy to parents. This also involves a parenting skills component, positive role modelling through the Circle of Support Program and employment prospects with the private sector.

An antigang education strategy includes a number of prevention and education initiatives geared at keeping young Manitobans from becoming involved in gang activity. The programs include Take Action in Schools. This new program was developed by the Winnipeg Police Service, and it puts officers in classrooms to provide antigang and antidrug education to enable youth to make appropriate life choices. We are assisting that program with the provision of financial assistance. As I understand it, it is very similar to programs in the United States and elsewhere with the acronyms DARE and GREAT, the latter being an antigang program.

The CHOICES Youth Program will incorporate a new restorative approach initiative. This is a very successful program, and we will be adding on conflict resolution education, anger management skills, enabling a mediation between students and establish a peer mediation program.

How to Keep Kids Out of Gangs will be a new public safety website available this summer. It will include information on preventing gang membership. A Gang Awareness manual will be produced and distributed this fall as a guide to parents, in particular, and service providers, those who work with youth. Manitoba Justice intends to provide strong national leadership, as well, and urging a Criminal Code amendment to

make it an offence to recruit individuals to gangs. We have been working with our counterparts across the country at the federal level to develop this.

Leadership is also being provided on the newly formed Deputy Minister Steering Committee on Organized Crime established to exchange strategies and successful practices among jurisdictions, make recommendations to government and provide oversight and monitoring on progress. We believe this particular strategy is a balanced approach that takes meaningful steps towards dealing with organized crime. We believe it will go a long way toward building safe and stable neighbourhoods. This strategy complements other government initiatives that focus on prevention and education with proactive community-based programs.

So far, Mr. Chair, I have been talking about initiatives that have already been announced and are in the process of being implemented. We have a busy year ahead, and I would now like to indicate to you some of what that will entail by mentioning initiatives we expect to launch in this budget year.

Soon we intend to introduce a new victims rights bill in the Legislature. It will provide victims with the strongest support in Canada. In connection with the previously described strategies, we intend to launch a Victim Notification Program and to improve access to compensation for victims of crime. Two new staff years have been budgeted for administration of these programs. New legislation will be introduced shortly with regard to licence suspension for auto theft. Conviction for auto theft will result in significant loss of driving privileges.

As I referred to earlier today, we will soon announce the increase of \$3.8 million in funding for our provincial RCMP police forces. This increase is justified in light of new or enhanced initiatives such as the RCMP gang awareness unit and community policing initiative. Also, as previously mentioned, we will announce provision of about \$550,000 in provincial funding for the violent crime linkage analysis system that will track serial offenders across the

country. We will also enhance the capability of the Brandon Police Service with the addition of two new police officer staff positions.

As I referred to earlier, we will soon announce details on how we will combine our native programming initiatives, the recommendations from the AJIC. In this light, we have allotted \$90,000 for Aboriginal elder prison services, \$40,000 for increased Aboriginal elder probation services and \$115,000 for community participation agreements.

With regard to court-related initiatives, as I mentioned earlier, we intend to announce in the near future an increase in staffing for maintenance enforcement and a new debt collection system that will target offenders with unpaid fines.

In the coming weeks and months, we will also announce an increase of about \$56,000 for justice committees and additional funding of about \$90,000 for domestic violence programming for offenders.

Now, Mr. Chair, in closing, I would like to comment that this government seeks to promote an open and accountable system of justice that recognizes the diversity in our society and treats all persons fairly and with respect. We support the development of preventative approaches, and we are committed to building a department that values personal integrity, responsibility, initiative and leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to provide this information about the Department as my government envisions it today and in the future. Thank you.

* (15:30)

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Justice for those comments. Does the Official Opposition critic, the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, have any opening comments?

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): First of all, I wanted to congratulate the Minister on his appointment to this portfolio, both having come from a legal background and studied at the same

law school. I think we overlapped one year, when I go through my old yearbooks, not that old of yearbooks.

An Honourable Member: Are you not a lot older than Gord?

Mr. Praznik: I am 39. I do not know what Gord's age is. So we will allow him to put that on the record. But I do believe he was in first year when I was in third and that we overlapped.

I do offer him my sincere congratulations. He served as Justice critic for the Official Opposition for a number of years, and it is very rewarding as a lawyer to be appointed to this particular position. It is a very challenging one in our province. It is also, I think, an honour for our law school, from which most of our Attorney Generals have come, to have another of their own appointed to this position. So I offer him my congratulations. I know it is a tough portfolio. I know we will be sparring from time to time. There will be other times when we may agree.

Given that this is, in fact, his first year in this portfolio and my first opportunity as critic, I appreciate that many of the administrative issues within the Department that appear in Estimates books are those that carry over from previously, our administration when it was in office. Many of the programs and issues carry over as well. Certainly some of them are programs that should always be there in expenditures; others are new initiatives or initiatives that have changed, et cetera.

I would like in the course of our Estimates—I do not know how long we are going to take. It is not my intention to spend days and days in these Estimates. I have a number of areas in which I have questions. Many of them are in the policy area. Some of them are specifically administrative issues on which I actually would like some update. Some of them are rather sensitive, and I appreciate that the Minister's ability to perhaps comment on them in committee may be somewhat limited. But they tend to be more, obviously, on the policy area, as opposed to the specific administrative lines of the Department.

I am not quite sure how the Minister would propose that we proceed. It has been customary from time to time in various committees to not necessarily go line by line but have a general discussion of issues over a day or two and then to proceed to wrap up the issues, as opposed to going line by line and then deal with the policy all under the Minister's Salary.

Some of the policy issues and some of the questions I may have may involve some specific staff. I know I have some questions around, for example, the correctional officer negotiation area, and I appreciate the sensitivity to that. I say to the Minister, having served on public sector Compensation Committee of Cabinet, I appreciate there is only so far I can go in those questions. I will respect that, and I will not try to put him in an awkward position.

I have some issues that come out of my own constituency with respect to Milner Ridge facility, more in terms of long-term planning within the Department. He may, in fact, want to have some staff available there. I have some questions on police enforcement issues. These are ones that certainly I do not view in any way as partisan. They arise from complaints that I have received as an MLA and as a Justice critic on sometimes the slowness in RCMP response to various issues. I will be looking for an update, as much as he is able to provide, on the 911 emergency issue in Winnipeg with reports coming, and, again, I appreciate that he may not be in a position to advise me as fully as I know he would like, and I certainly will respect that. But these are areas that I would like to canvass at least in some way.

Certainly I have some questions over the AJI implementation committee. Some of those are policy; some of those are with respect to the costs being incurred. Just looking over my notes, there are again some policy issues that I would like to touch on.

I do not know necessarily how much time it will take, but I would ask the Minister perhaps—I am just about finished my comments—administratively if he would like to offer some advice as to how he would like to proceed, which staff he would like to have here. I am certainly prepared to accommodate my

questioning around availability of people he would like to have in the room as well.

If I may just add in conclusion, perhaps it is because I have been here a number of years as a Cabinet minister and an MLA, and certainly from a legal background I recognize fully that the Minister is in an unenviable task. To some degree, I think he appreciates, so as the critic, because every time a crime takes place, an assault, a murder, a robbery—we live in an age of instant media—the expectation is that something needs to be done about it and that the Minister of Justice, as the chief law enforcement officer of the province, should have done something, and as long as human beings are independent of nature, people will continue to do things for which they should be held responsible.

Critics get asked why are you not asking those questions and Ministers get asked what could have you done differently. It is difficult because the real problem lies in the perpetrator and those individuals who break laws. Our job is to ensure, when they do, that the system, whether it be an administrator as a minister or a critic, has a watchful eye to ensure the system works as well as it can.

Never in human history, of course, have we lived in a perfectly crime-free society, so I appreciate that miracles are not within anybody's kit bag. Some of the problems that are facing our society we have seen grow over the last number of decades, and they have grown just not in our province but in others under a variety of political parties. They are societal, and can they be arrested, can they be slowed, can they be changed, are all questions that we as politicians attempt to resolve. We do recognize that a perfect world we do not live in, and yet sometimes we are held to that standard.

So I wanted to say that to the Minister that I do appreciate that position which he is in, and it is certainly not my intention to hold him to the standard of a perfect justice system in which no one commits any crime. I certainly appreciate as well that many of the issues with which he is dealing as Minister of Justice are not of his making, nor I think he would admit of mine or my party's or any political party's, but they are representative of changes in society, issues that

society has to deal with, and they are not necessarily easy to deal with. I wanted to let him know that I fully appreciate that, and certainly that is a thought that is in the back of my mind when many of these issues, in fact, occur. So again my congratulations to him and to the staff and to his department who generally, I think, have performed reasonably well over the years in service to my party in government and certainly, I expect, in service to him and his party while in government. I look forward to our discussions over the next day or two.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the Official Opposition for those remarks.

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

Before we do that, we invite the Minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the Minister introduce his staff present.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am very proud of our senior staff and particularly those here today. Next to me is the Deputy Attorney General Bruce MacFarlane. Next to him is Rob Finlayson, the ADM of Prosecutions. Next to Mr. Finlayson is Wyman Sangster, the Acting ADM of Criminal Justice, and also in the room is Pat Sinnott, the Executive Director of Administration and Finance, as well as Mike Horn of Law Enforcement Services.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister for that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I would just like to ask the Minister what his preference is to proceed. I think, if we were to be able to deal with a number of issues based on availability of staff, we could probably proceed through Estimates at a faster pace.

* (15:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: I expect that we may be able to rally the accurate answers for the Member from the staff present, and if he wishes to engage

in general questioning—my concern is that I answer the questions accurately so, if there is a question that I think we would have to get an answer for him on from other staff or from paper, we can either come back with that or the practice has been between myself and former ministers, former AGs, that a written response will be provided when the information is gathered. In fact, I recall getting two-inch-thick documents as a result of Estimates from year to year.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, that is fine, and as I said, my intention is not to be here for a long time in Estimates. I think any new minister coming in, my tough questions—although I must say, Mr. Chair, that today would be a very good opportunity for me to ask all the questions that I could not ask publicly of our own Attorney General that I wanted answered. I may have had a dispute in policy with them, but, no, I do recognize in the first year certainly it takes some time till there is a significant difference in policy that is worthy of the kind of questions at Estimates.

So I just have some, as I said, general ones, and I will accept, certainly, if the answers are not here today, either if we go to tomorrow or if the Minister undertakes to provide them in writing, that would suit me very nicely.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement of the Committee to have a global discussion of the Estimates of Justice with the understanding to afterwards go back and pass line by line? *[Agreed]* Therefore it is agreed to do a global discussion.

We will now proceed to line 1.(b)(1) with the understanding there will be a global discussion on the entire department.

Mr. Praznik: I want to just touch on the correctional officers negotiations. Having served at Public Sector Compensation Committee, I appreciate that the Department is not necessarily able to get into all the details. Negotiating through the media is not something I countenanced when I was a minister. I am not going to ask you to do the same.

I just want to find out if, in fact, the Department is involved in those negotiations through whatever Cabinet structure you, in fact, have put in place as a new government, or is this being handled by Treasury Board without departmental input?

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that the Civil Service Commission takes the lead in the negotiating process because, of course, there has to be the big picture in mind, given that we are dealing with negotiations affecting all components in the MGEU. It is also my understanding that the Corrections division has been involved. I might just add that when questioned on this my response has been that I, as I am sure the Member does, respect the collective bargaining process. I am hopeful that there will be a successful resolution at the bargaining table. I suppose that is a standard answer, but I do want to avoid, of course, bargaining in public. As I understand it, really, my central role is to ensure the safety of the public and inmates and others in the event there is any job action.

Mr. Praznik: That leads into really my next question, which is, I do not think, one that interferes with bargaining. There has been some threat of job action that is part of the collective bargaining process. Has the Department put into place steps, if you do face a job action, to be able to deal with it at our facilities. If so, what are those plans? I would ask for nothing more than what you would be able to provide that same comfort to the public as opposed to any of the things that might be confidential for security reasons.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have been quite impressed with the work that has gone into putting in place a backup plan. Essentially it involves engaging the RCMP to perform correctional official functions. There is a fair bit of detail to that plan. If there is any other detail, we could arrange for Corrections officials, Mr. Graceffo, for example, the ADM, to be here.

Mr. Praznik: I will just give you these questions. If we require an answer at some other point that would be fine as well. I am curious to know if that does involve the early release of offenders who would be viewed as less

dangerous and what criteria would be used if that is the case.

Mr. Mackintosh: That is a question that perhaps we can raise with Mr. Graceffo or it can be asked again. We could ask him to come here or we could provide that answer in writing.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, it may not be a bad idea actually if we could have him here early tomorrow afternoon just for this discussion. Another area, of course, is would the use of the RCMP by contract mean the removal of RCMP from other detachment work across the province, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the force during that period?

Mr. Mackintosh: If we can put off those questions, those are very important questions. I would certainly benefit from the advice of Mr. Graceffo on that. I understand that he is available for tomorrow or, as I say, we could provide it in writing.

Mr. Praznik: I would be delighted to engage in that discussion first thing tomorrow afternoon if that is possible.

The other area on this is, there is a fair bit of media debate, as there always is in negotiations about positions people take. I certainly know, coming from having been in government, that we are responsible for negotiations in the past. The MGEU, of course, is responsible for the settlements they recommend. Would it be possible to have a copy of the comparative rates of pay for correctional officers across the country? I know people flag these. Would it be possible to obtain the document? I am only asking for what would be, in essence, factual information.

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that that information would be available in the department, and we could endeavour to get that information for the Member.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, could I take it that perhaps we could have that tomorrow afternoon, and that would be fine? I ask because we get queried about it, and it is useful to have factual

information with which to work. So I appreciate that.

Mr. Mackintosh: We will endeavour to have that available for the Member as early as tomorrow.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, if I may, I do not know if other staff are needed, but I would like to get into the area of RCMP services, generally, and any plans that may be presented by them. I appreciate the difficulty the Minister of Justice and their staff, having served in Cabinet for nine years, many times the frustration one often got in the decisions that the RCMP would be making in moving officers, changing detachments and work schedules, and often the finger gets pointed directly at the Minister of Justice because he pays, but recognizing that, administratively, he does not necessarily have the power to direct. But we have detected again this winter a number of plans that the RCMP have proposed for changing detachments and administrative services.

I would like to be able to engage in some discussion about that and where that is. Perhaps, if you want to have some other staff here, that would be understandable.

* (15:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we are prepared to answer questions now.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, if perhaps because my experience has always been one where this is changing from time to time, I think I can recall three or four times as an MLA where the RCMP were rolling around with another plan for detachments.

If the Minister would like his staff to answer directly, I do not have a problem with that. It is up to him, of course, but I would like to know what the latest, if there have been any more proposals by the RCMP since the 5th of October when the Minister assumed office, or made just before the transfer of power for changing detachments, numbers and administrative units. I do know that in my area, in eastern Manitoba, there was discussion last fall about changing the administration and service out of the Beausejour

area and moving it to Selkirk. I just wondered how widespread this was.

Mr. Mackintosh: The only change that would affect indeed the individual member's constituency to a certain extent was a movement of positions from Lac du Bonnet to Selkirk. I believe the Member would be aware of that. That was in respect of servicing three northern communities. The proposal there was that the northern communities be serviced from Selkirk for cost-effective reasons, rather than from Lac du Bonnet, which, I understand, historically has had a role as a sea-plane base, if you will. My understanding is that those plans were unfolding. Indeed, just yesterday, I spoke to the RCMP inspector responsible for the Selkirk detachment. I understand that those plans are underway.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair. I would ask if the Minister could undertake to provide for myself and my communities the cost analysis of that effectiveness, because the Lac du Bonnet facilities traditionally service those communities. There is a float base and an airstrip, an all-year, all-weather airstrip, a paved strip in Lac du Bonnet. The concern, as I am sure the Minister would appreciate—and it is something that has been there for a number of years—is about consolidating more and more RCMP function into Selkirk and making the town of Selkirk a super-centre, in essence, for the RCMP, to the detriment of the outlying areas.

Lac du Bonnet has been a jumping-off and service centre for the northeastern part of Manitoba. The Department of Natural Resources is headquartered there for the eastern region. The fire suppression main control centre for the eastern region is located in Lac du Bonnet. The federal government paved the airfield, of which the RCMP are one of the largest users. We have an airfield with a float base, the only one in Manitoba to provide for that. There is also, I think, a natural sense of constituency, in a broad sense, of Lac du Bonnet being the service centre and jumping-off point to a part of that area as opposed to Selkirk, which is certainly much more connected to Winnipeg.

I know that, even within the local community, about operating administratively the

communities of Beausejour, Pine Falls, the Powerview detachment, the Pinawa detachment, Lac du Bonnet detachment, have tended to work just in their flow much more co-operatively. The flow of traffic tends to work more in that area than it does going to Selkirk. So there was a concern that this was a convenience issue as opposed to an economic or cost-effective one. We would certainly like to see the cost analysis proposed by the RCMP to justify that decision.

Mr. Mackintosh: We could arrange one or two things for the Member. We can certainly request that from the RCMP, but further we may be able to assist in arranging for a meeting between the RCMP and the Member, if he so chooses.

Mr. Praznik: Yes. I would appreciate if the Minister's staff could undertake that. Perhaps sometime this summer, in July, we could arrange and have a meeting with my constituents as well because it is a great concern, and the believability is not necessarily there that this was a good move. Certainly, it has undermined Lac du Bonnet somewhat as a service centre for that particular area.

I ask the Minister again—[interjection] Okay, I am sorry, I will defer to the Minister.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could I just clarify what the Member would like? Would he like the Department to arrange a meeting between the Member and the RCMP on this issue? I just want to make sure that we are responding accordingly.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, and if the Minister would be so kind, perhaps his appropriate staff might be present. Perhaps we could do the meeting right here sometime in the latter part of June in the building. Because, I think, if, in fact, the answers are not there, knowing the Attorney General, he may have some of the same questions I might have so if that is possible, I would be most appreciative.

Mr. Mackintosh: We will make that request now.

Mr. Praznik: As well, with respect to the RCMP, I received some complaint out of the detachments servicing the Manigotagan area about the slowness in response. Now, there are

always two sides to every story, but I certainly had a case of a break-in theft and a slowness of response to that. I believe that is serviced out of the Powerview detachment. It raises two questions: Is there a laxness in service; or is the Department really overworked to be able to handle these matters—and for constituents and those who live in the Manigotagan, Bissett and out of my constituency into Hollow Water, into that of the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson)?

I tend to be getting a few complaints out of this area. Again, it may be indicative of just a very busy detachment not having time to do the work so it is an area that has come to my attention. I certainly would ask if the liaison could perhaps undertake some discussion, and at the same meeting that we have with the RCMP, if this could perhaps be put on the agenda?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if the Member might have specifics in terms of whether this was a particular incident or certain dates or whether it is just a general complaint? It may be helpful for the RCMP to respond.

Mr. Praznik: I have one specific incident that I will convey, I think privately, at the close of this committee, but I have also attended a meeting with the RCMP and a number of municipal officials. They were indicating very clearly that they had the same concern; the slowness of response of the RCMP detachment in Powerview to a lot of local activity. They are being told that their time was being spent doing other things.

I really got the impression, in fairness to those who serve in Powerview, that it was a matter of their resources being stretched beyond reasonable ability. So I had one specific case, the mayors and reeves of the area had their own and there was some of this conveyed. I believe the meeting could have been last fall, this winter, but I have had this one complaint since. If the Minister will undertake to have his staff put that on the agenda, I will share with his staff after today's sitting the specifics of the one case, and we can put it into motion.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we will certainly take the specifics and the general information and

include it in the request to the RCMP to meet that item for the agenda. It is the same detachment, I understand, not detachment, but the same subdivision.

*(16:00)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, this leads into I guess the other area, and that is the area of aboriginal policing and relations with the RCMP and their role in this. Over the years, I have noticed a growing number of Aboriginal persons working with the RCMP. I think that has been excellent. I would just wonder if the Minister could update us as to what the current relationships are, and what efforts the RCMP have continued to undertake to expand their auxiliary constables recruitment, et cetera?

I must say that in the communities I serve, it has been viewed as a very positive development. I am going to give the Minister the chance to put on the record some positive stuff here because I think it is good stuff and worthy of being on the record, if he could perhaps update us in this particular area?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, we have made available to the RCMP the funding that is necessary to help improve and build on the aboriginal components of provincial policing. As well, we are supportive of the expansion of aboriginal policing and stand-alone policing. I think we are seeing some positive movement on all three of those models.

There have been, and continue to be, negotiations with regard to, for example, the community of Waywayseecappo and the Dakota Ojibway communities, and we are looking to see positive conclusions to those discussions.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we certainly have seen those services develop and grow and take on more responsibility. It has certainly been a good thing to see happen. In that particular vein, a number of municipalities across the province, who have become frustrated over the years about the lack of RCMP attention to what are relatively smaller matters, et cetera, in local policing, because I think of the general pressure put on the force for more serious matters, they

have often opted to establish their own local policing. I know East St. Paul has an officer.

Are there any plans in the Department, or does the Minister have any plans today, to see that expanded further, in terms of support for funding arrangements for the expansion of municipal police forces that are doing that sort of community patrol, by-law enforcement and other things? I think there are a number of municipalities—like Alexander has a police officer now. East St. Paul has a police officer. This, by and large, has been taking over some of the role that the Mounties used to undertake in less hectic times, shall we say. I am just curious as to the Minister's thoughts on this area.

Mr. Mackintosh: Funding has been made available and discussions are hopefully about to conclude with regard to the further development of auxiliary policing in Altona, Ste. Anne and Rivers. Those are municipal forces. In terms of other developments with regard to municipal forces, I understand that the Brandon Police Service is in discussions with some neighbouring communities or R.M.s with regard to expanding their jurisdiction. That is, I think, at a very preliminary stage. The communities of Thompson, Dauphin, Leaf Rapids, Powerview, Teulon, Brandon, Ste. Anne, Winkler and Altona have all expressed an interest in participating in the Auxiliary Constable Program.

Mr. Praznik: One of the issues that was raised with me by several of my constituents in the Powerview area, particularly the Mayor, in auxiliary policing, and we have a lot of citizens who are interested in being involved, whether being an auxiliary police force or Citizens on Patrol, which I guess would be another level of activity. One of the concerns, of course, is financial support for equipment such as radios, telephones, cell phones, so that people could be in contact. I wondered if the Department, in one of its funds or initiatives, may consider at some point in time providing that kind of equipment assistance. I know auxiliary policing is so different, but certainly if a community was going to organise a Citizens on Patrol or even auxiliary policing that some provincial assistance towards equipment purchase to ensure that people who are doing it are in contact. Is that something the

Minister may be contemplating for future days and budgets?

Mr. Mackintosh: As the Member knows, the Citizen on Patrol program, or the COP program, has developed over the last number of years, a relatively short number of years. We continue to get applications in from local communities and citizens who are banning together to provide this kind of volunteer service in their neighbourhoods. Indeed, I can even speak of my own community where there are five citizen patrols in varying stages of development just in my constituency. It is a way for citizens to get actively involved and develop a greater sense of community, obviously a greater sense of safety, indeed, I think safety in the real sense.

The Department has been facilitating the development of the COP program through the Crime Prevention Fund. Applications can be received by the Department for assistance to purchase equipment or uniforms, for example, stationary supplies, to secure bank accounts. I think the usual level of grant is in the area of around \$1,500, I would say. Perhaps that is even at the higher end. I know that funds are provided only after there is careful examination of the application and the use for which the funds will be made.

In my area I am aware of one group that used the funds for jackets and for two-way radios. As well, because of my experience in the local neighbourhood with these citizen patrols, you become aware of some greater needs that perhaps the Department can help to meet. We are aware, for example, of how useful cell phones are to these organizations and yet how expensive the air time is. As well, the jackets vary from one citizen group to another and we are looking at the pros and cons of offering, not insisting, but offering jackets of one type that would be a mesh type, I suppose. I am just speculating on some of the options that could be considered. I think the most useful kind of jacket has been the crossing-guard type jacket which can be used on the hottest or the coldest day of the year. And then local communities could put on their own lettering.

Those are all ideas that the Department is looking at in terms of how we could improve the

Citizens on Patrol program. There are some other ideas that I have heard from time to time. One is to try and start advertising this kind of initiative to encourage people to get involved in their own community, recognizing that safety is not someone else's problem. We are all in this together. I think we can build on this. I think we can provide some national leadership in this program and if the Member has any ideas he would like to share, I would certainly like to entertain those. The program was so well subscribed to last fiscal year that we actually ran out of funding just before the end of the fiscal year, so some applications were unfortunately delayed a little bit. But I know applications are now being processed.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am actually very interested in the Minister's comments. When I served as Minister of Labour and was responsible for the Fire Commissioner's office, we noticed that our volunteer fire department was getting a better co-ordination, certainly the creation of mutual aid districts and building a provincial camaraderie in what was in essence municipal fire services, to build the sense of a provincial fire service, went a long way to making it an exciting place for people to be spending some of their time as volunteers. As a critic, I would not be adverse in any way; in fact I would encourage the Minister. I would be encouraging of the Minister to look at taking this program to build in essence a province-wide Citizens on Patrol kind of organization, again, of volunteers, not losing the volunteer of the community aspect. I like what he is saying about a common uniform. Perhaps instead of grants of money, it could be the grant of the uniform that goes with it for the service.

I think the Minister may also want to entertain looking at doing some training, common training events, where people from regions of the city, regions of the province could come together for additional training that they may need. So you build some camaraderie, some sense of a province-wide service. We certainly would not be adverse to those kinds of initiatives and seeing this program develop. I think that is probably the next stage where it would go. So those are some suggestions I would offer. Perhaps another time it would be worthwhile, and perhaps he and I privately could sit down

and explore this a little bit together. He may find he has an ally in that process.

* (16:10)

I would also make this suggestion to him although I am sure it is not the first time he has heard it, but using this kind of organization with the uniform, the camaraderie, the training, the pride that goes with this may be a tool that he and his colleagues may wish to consider. Certainly, in the downtown urban north-end communities that have seen increases in crime activity, certainly working with the leadership of the urban aboriginal community in seeing this develop, it may be a very good tool to get a lot of particularly younger people who might otherwise end up in gangs or other activities, getting involved in this type of activity to be part of the solution rather than the problem. Now, does that always make sense? No—for everybody. But it may be something that he may want to consider expanding. It would be an area that he would probably find a good deal of support from this side of the House and from this MLA for. So if he ever wants to sit down and pursue this privately, I would be more than welcome to discuss it in greater detail, but I offer that. I am sure he has heard those suggestions before.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is interesting, the idea of having a common jacket came from a chap that lives up the street from me on Cathedral Avenue. Some of the best ideas come from the people that are on these patrols. A couple of weeks ago, the City of Winnipeg Police Service in District 3 had a North Winnipeg Citizens on Patrol meeting.

They have now assigned one constable, Cam Jones, who is well known and respected in north Winnipeg communities, to co-ordinate the citizen patrol program there. I can just see the great development that lies ahead. In fact, at that meeting, which not only was full, attended by community people in a number of different patrols, perhaps six or seven patrols, the constables who were there, the inspector for the district and I think we are talking about ten police officers who were there, I really made the point in my remarks that we are having great support from the law enforcement community

for this initiative. They do respect the eyes and ears that these people bring, and I guess that is really part and parcel of how we proceed.

This cannot be an initiative only of the province. It is a partnership initiative between the communities and the police service in the particular area. I think we can build on that. The police are the main contacts for the Citizen on Patrol programs. They are the ones who are called. They are the ones who come to the formation meetings. They have a lot to offer in terms of ideas, and I look forward to extending the dialogue. It should be noted, just for the record, that there are now 53 rural COP programs and 19 Winnipeg COP programs. I do not know how current the 19 is. I do know that my area, West Kildonan, for example, is just awaiting their funding. I heard that there was one other one that was up and running.

I also add, though, that nothing prevents anyone from putting together a citizen patrol group on their own. Sometimes these groups develop in isolation from law enforcement officials and without requesting any funding and so be it. I suppose the more people that are concerned about public safety and are out being eyes and ears, the better. But this does offer, particularly the crime prevention fund, a way to try and formalize and organize and, as the Member says, build a sense of camaraderie or a sense that there are a lot of people out there who are thinking about these issues, that can learn techniques from one another.

There has been some training offered. I know the public safety branch in our department has been involved in some sessions. For example, when the issue of arson was particularly distressing in Winnipeg, there was a meeting held, the citizen patrols at I think R. B. Russell School in Winnipeg. But I certainly agree that there is a great potential for more organized training. But again, that has to be in partnership recognizing the role of the law enforcement agencies. As well, some citizen patrols have been relying on bicycles to do their job. I think that is wonderful. Some have been relying on vehicles.

I know at the last Crime Prevention Awards, the Elm Park Citizens Patrol was recognized for

their outstanding work, and they have there a cadre of over 100 citizen patrollers. They use vehicles. In our area, we have concluded that with vehicles you often miss a lot of things, and you do not establish a relationship with people. They do not see you. You do not see them. But it is also important that we recognize and celebrate the successes of the model citizen patrol programs, and we will certainly try and augment that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, no, I am pleased to hear that, and again, it is a good idea that has evolved and developing. The next stage, obviously, is to have that province-wide connection and that common jacket, uniform, that is identifiable, the sense of camaraderie.

I say to the Minister from my own experience as having been responsible for the fire service, the more that the volunteer fire departments gain that sense of a uniform, that sense of a provincial service, the sense of training through mutual aid districts—we use the mutual aid system to be able to deal with Train the Trainer and with fire departments of a local area. It was just amazing to see it. I was most pleased by the end of the four years I was there with the initiatives that we had taken to the Manitoba Fire College, now Emergency Services College.

Manitoba was rated as having one of the top volunteer rural fire services in North America, and that happened I think because of the camaraderie that led to the competition and the training, you know, people wanting to get the courses and do the things because it was part of the camaraderie of the core of fire service people and firefighters. The same kind of thing, I think, might catch fire—pardon the pun—in the COP program and see it grow. Of course, the more of that camaraderie you get, it is easier to recruit volunteers.

I just suggest to the Minister he may find that if it grows and develops, it might become a very good tool to be recruiting younger people in areas of the city that are more prone to gang activity, arson and other things to play a role improving the community. So it may become a vehicle for many people to get involved in some sort of organized activity rather than organized

crime and gang activity, because it provides the camaraderie sense of accomplishment, whatever that people are craving. So we would be very pleased to work with him and be supportive of seeing this certainly expand if there is a potential to do that. I wanted to make sure he was aware of that support today.

Mr. Mackintosh: I envision this kind of a program as part of broader initiative of greater community justice with the participation of citizens in the justice system is absolutely critical, and I think the way the justice system looks today will not look the same in a few years. That is in part, I think, through some leadership but, in part, because I think citizens are looking for ways to improve their communities and help provide solutions.

* (16:20)

Mr. Praznik: Yes, just on that point if I may move into a bit of an ancillary area and that is, of course, the Community Justice Committees that were created some years ago by the Government of which I was a part. I always was a supporter of that kind of initiative of taking the courts out of sentencing, in essence.

We will talk a little bit about the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry later, but one thing that I think we have all learned from or relearned from the Aboriginal Justice system is something I believe we lost in our society several decades ago, that when people commit criminal activity—and I am not talking about murders here, but I am talking about maybe a fight, maybe a robbery, a minor assault, et cetera—whether the kind of relative minor crimes but still very important to a community can cause a community to be concerned, that the most meaningful punishment or means of correcting the behaviour is to have to face the people you live with every day and the people who suffered because of you and look them in the eye and have some penalty imposed upon you that is meaningful in that community, as opposed to be being taken out of that community and dealing with some amorphous justice system that sort of spits you out somewhere else.

The success of I believe those Community Justice Committees and others in reducing repeat

offenders, I believe has been demonstrated, at least I hope it has been.

So I ask the Minister: Is it his intention to be expanding that particular initiative across the province and other areas where perhaps today it is lacking? I do not know what his thoughts are, but I would like to have a sense of where he sees that going.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have been speaking as often as I can on this issue publicly, and I encourage the Member to do that as well. The Member can, I think, speak from some experiences in his own constituency, because eastern Manitoba, the people in Beausejour, for example, I think have provided some real leadership and sound community contribution through this kind of justice.

The youth justice committee model started with the introduction of the Young Offenders Act really, but in Manitoba, in around 1984-85, it seemed to catch on more than other jurisdictions in Canada. It is my understanding that of all the provinces in Canada, like with the citizen patrol program, there seems to be more interest in the development of this kind of community initiative than other provinces.

I think there has been a lot of great experience in this over the years. There has been a development of some very different models in different communities, and that is how it should be. But I think now it is time to build on that, to look at this kind of model in dealing with not just youth crimes, and I know in the Member's community there is some interest in that. When we look at the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, community justice is very much a part of the underlying thrust of those recommendations. I think it is time, though, that we not just talk about and move on Aboriginal justice but non-Aboriginal community justice, whether it is in Beausejour or Dauphin or Waywayseecappo.

I think that not only are citizens entitled to take part in the justice system, particularly for lesser offences, but there is a much more important lesson taught to an offender and a greater satisfaction to the victim when an offender has to make right the wrong. It is the

community justice model, of course, that accommodates that. As well, there has to be accountability to the community. One of my proudest bits of involvement since becoming an MLA in the community development has been my work with the development of the St. John's youth justice council and what I have seen over the years since it came into existence, some tremendous examples of how young offenders can be turned around just by some people in the community caring, at the same time providing what really is tough justice.

I think we have to question the appropriate role for the courts in dealing with lesser offences where the offender will accept responsibility. Of course, the traditional courts we inherited from England, I think, have done an excellent job, by and large, when there are not guilty pleas, and those courts test the evidence in this contest between the Crown and the defence. Although there are a lot of improvements needed there, particularly with regard to how victims are dealt with, there have to be more than outcomes like probation, for example, for a year or two, and reporting on a monthly basis to a probation officer is the only consequence. That kind of consequence may well have its place with regard to certain offences, but I think we can be much more innovative and I know the justice committees provide that innovation.

I think of examples in my community, and this is one of the first cases that I recall coming where a young offender, a very young fellow, was caught breaking a window in a school. As a consequence, aside from paying for the cost of that window, which should be bottom line, he was required to and agreed to help in, I believe, a kindergarten or Grade 1 class with a reading program. His mother said she noticed a marked change in the boy's behaviour, and he became much more interested in reading. Very interestingly, the class got to really like the chap and did not want to let him go after he had finished his community work and he stayed on and worked.

An example of a shoplifter at a major supermarket chain, as a consequence arrangements were made between the supermarket chain and the Justice counsel for the offender to bag groceries for a period of time and start to be

accountable in that way. I could go and on with different examples, but I think that it is often the first offence, it is the most important offence in teaching a lesson and making sure that the victim is repaired. We want to do everything we can to expand this kind of model.

Now, the RCMP have taken an active role in expanding what they call community justice forums. They are very keen on this, and they see it as tough justice, as effective justice. This year we have increased the support for justice committees by \$56,000, but I see over the next year or two an aggressive plan to try and plant the seeds in different communities in Manitoba, not only to establish youth justice councils or committees but adult forums as well. That can be done in partnership with agencies like the RCMP, so I hope that responds appropriately to the Member's question.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairperson, I think I have to tell you that the Minister and I are in 100% agreement here. I would argue very strongly that the program needs to be expanded to the adult side in greater numbers, and, you know, one can deal with these from a lot of angles. That is one of the issues around the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. I mean, there are a lot of issues there, but I think one of the prime recommendations of that report, and you read through a lot of detail, is the need for relevance in justice. It has to be relevant to the victim, it has to be relevant to the perpetrator, if you are going to have any effect. I mean, punishment is certainly a part of that, but relevance to changing their life, to making sure the victim feels that they have had justice and that there is some correction made on the part of the perpetrator.

*(16:30)

Community justice committees, the ability to make the penalty relevant, meaningful and, hopefully, such that you are also fixing and healing the person who has caused the problem is absolutely key. I have never believed that that should just be alone or an initiative that just should be there in First Nations communities.

I have always believed it is something that should be equally available to everyone in the province because I think there is a good lesson

from it, and some of the old-timers in Beausejour remind me of the days of the old municipal constable when he caught the kid breaking a window or stealing something or another, it was grabbing him by the ear and dragging him off to Mom and Dad and then having to go and make amends and do the things. The kid may never have ended up before a court, before a Charter of Rights, before any of the parts of our legal system where guilt and innocence are determined. But he never did the offence again because it was relevant in the community. He had to face the person he had harmed. He had to make good, and he and his parents were embarrassed by it. The pressure was there.

I think the Minister and I are in the same vein, and I would encourage him wholeheartedly to continue to see this expand across the province and really be incorporated into our Justice system as a regular part of it, in the width and breadth of this province for all its citizens. How one defines communities and relevance are all questions that are going to be different everywhere, but the principle and the opportunity to have it I think is key, if we are going to have a Justice system that is going to be relevant to all who participate in it.

I remember the story when I was travelling up north of an elder who told me about the young fellow who got caught breaking in: We put him in a plane, we flew him to Winnipeg, we put him in the youth centre or whatever it was for three months, and he had a relatively decent time and an adventure, the first time he was in Winnipeg, and flew him back. There was no relevance.

Whereas with these committees, the same kind of offence would have resulted in probably spending some time with an elder on a trapline for a few weeks in the ruggedness of the winter, and many more lessons being taught and learned.

The Minister and I, I think, are on the same wavelength here. I would just wish him full speed as he moves ahead with that particularly. Perhaps he has another comment then I can get into some more questioning.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think, too, there is potential in having a greater ability for these participants in community justice committees to share ideas about the range of sanctions.

I know at one point a number of years ago there was a concern that there was a bit of slump taking place in that the community justice committees were relying disproportionately on apology letters. There started to be some work emitting from the meeting of chairs of the committees on making lists on the kinds of sanctions that can be used. But, other than incarceration, there is virtually no limit to the kind of consequences.

As well, I think there is a growing recognition that victims have to really be encouraged to take part in that process. Finally, there is a growing recognition, and I think a role for government, through some funding help, and that is why we are putting additional amounts in, \$56,000 this year, to expand the toolbox, if you will, for youth justice committees so that they can employ, not just the traditional youth justice committee response, but can use mediation or family group conferencing or sentencing circles.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, that concept of sentencing circles and involvement certainly, again, just I think a good way to ensure that there is community involvement, that victims are involved in it, and I think we are in agreement in that area.

Mr. Chair, one of the areas I would like to move into and spend a little bit of time on is the area of family law and some family law reform. I am interested, not so much in specifics and details, but more getting a sense about where the Minister views this part of his department and where it should be going. I think it comes in the same vein of trying to reduce the formality of the system and take the acrimony out of the system to one that is being able to be more effective.

I will give the Minister a sense of where I am coming from on this, having personally gone through it myself in a very amicable way, in terms of a family breakdown and separation, divorce, and having watched others go through it over the years, and having worked with constituents who have been through it, one

comes to the conclusion it is never easy, but there is always a right way and a wrong way. I think my former spouse and I went through the right way, but we see many who go through the wrong way.

Regrettably, I think, in our family law area today, there is still a great deal of legalistic process, which I understand is important at times, but one has to appreciate what the position is. We have come to the point in our society, we have amended our divorce act so that marital breakdown are the grounds, which is a year living separate and apart. So, there is no fight over, in the law at least, the reasons why people choose not to be. They were not back to the old days of divorce, where you had to prove adultery or cruelty or those things. We have eliminated that.

I think it was Gerry Mercier who championed that cause some years ago, and it has been followed across Canada, in terms of marital property, splits and those types of things. So there are not issues around how property is divided, in principle at least.

I think we have seen a growing development in the areas of joint custody and responsibility for children. Governments and political parties I think have encouraged both parents in those situations to be able to remain as active participants in the lives of their children. But we do still have a system that, by its process, tends to result, at least in my view, in many places for the acrimony that often accompanies these splits to break out and be used as tools for personal anger.

I know today he has a plate full of issues with which he has to deal, in terms of gang violence and crime, but I want to ask the Minister if he foresees in his term of office some effort that he would like to spend in doing some further reform in the family law area, where perhaps we were looking at reducing the necessary court or legal process in this, where we were looking at being able to bring families together with the use of a mediator, counsellor, accountant, the kinds of people with the tools that can help to work out these issues in a less formal manner than our system has often been involved.

Speaking to friends who are in the family law bar, they still tell me on a regular basis that much effort, money, energy, mental energy, emotional energy are still expended in the separation and divorce process by people using the various tools that are there to be able to fight battles that really are not there to be fought in the courts. This is an area where I think we have reached in my view, the next stage where we need to give some thought. Many in the family law bar, I think, are of this view, of having processes in place within the justice system that would allow couples to have a means of settling their issues. In many cases, it is not even settling; it is a process in which couples deciding to end their relationship as married couples, still having children and assets and things to deal with, could have a process through which they could deal that would be cost-effective. It is not for everybody.

I envision, at least, some formal mediation process where a couple deciding that they wanted to end their marriage would be able to enter with a mediator, and pay a fee for this, of course, on the services, but certainly having access to a neutral financial party, and a neutral mediator, and perhaps a neutral counsellor, that would allow them with a more limited involvement of legal counsel to be able to put together their agreement for settlement, and to be able to move on with their lives. Why this becomes very important is because the longer it takes, and the more court-involved the process is, I think, the children end up suffering in these things.

Now, I was fortunate in my personal circumstances. I went through it in a very co-operative manner, to be blunt, without disagreement. We worked out our issues. But many others I have seen have expended their resources to achieve the same end. I ask the Minister if he is prepared to look at, and I do not come today with a magic solution, but is he prepared to look at—and perhaps, I even suggest to him today that our House leaders may wish to have some discussion, if this is an area in which he thinks there is some possibility of looking at some change or reform to perhaps approach it on an all-party basis. I certainly would be interested in participating in that, in developing within the legal system, within the court system, some

vehicles that would accommodate in certain circumstances, that would be more productive than the current method.

* (16:40)

I would like his views. Has he been thinking about this? I do make the offer that if there is an interest—I do not expect an answer today—but this might be an area where an all-party effort, in fact, might be there to work on.

Mr. Mackintosh: There are a number of initiatives that are developing, but I share the Member's interest in seeing that there is a greater use of, perhaps we can call it community justice or a different way of doing things, rather than the adversarial system as it applies to family break-up. Family break-up, certainly, can be stressful in and of itself without the introduction then of an adversarial system to try and resolve the outstanding issues. Indeed, in many cases, it can be completely contrary to the interests of the larger family.

We have been increasing supports in the development of home mediation, which is the involvement of, not just mediators, but human relations experts. As well, training has been provided to lawyers, I know, and we just had a discussion in the last couple of days with a judge in family division of a real growing interest and recognition that there is a better way of doing business, and a very great interest in expanding mediation. I think it is a matter of working with the judiciary to determine how we can help them grow in this area.

A couple of other growing features: One is the development of case management in the Family Division over the last year or two. As a result of co-operative effort among the department, the judiciary, and the bar, a pilot project developed to determine whether case management, in other words, judicially controlled development of and processing of cases, could assist in a more positive outcome and a more timely outcome. As a result of the Budget, we are able now to move, I believe, in January to the implementation on a permanent basis of case management in the family division, which is really providing some national leadership.

As well, we have developed a prototype and some national leadership in what are called auto orders, whereby orders of the court can be concluded on the spot by way of a template and computerized system that has different options. Instead of the orders then going to council by mail and other routes, which can often take months to conclude, the parties can leave the court with the order in hand.

As well, we are looking at issues of custody and access. Right now I know there is a particular interest in development of options there. The Member suggested there may be a role for perhaps a standing committee or some forum to perhaps canvass the views of Manitobans and look for positive change. That is a matter I will certainly consider.

Mr. Praznik: Just a couple of issues that again get flagged out of this. I appreciate the issues around orders and court orders, but what I envisioned was a vehicle by which a family, couple, wishing to dissolve their relationship, who have children and assets, are able to meet with basically neutral parties to get a sense of what the law is and what happens. So much of the decisions now are made by statute. Child support is determined by guidelines. The division of assets is established by law. There are rules around pension division, et cetera. So they are not the kind of battles that one fights. It is probably far better. Once people get a sense of the way this works, there is really very little to fight about, other than raw emotion. If you are both employing the advocate to argue, they tend to become—even though I think most members of the family bar do not necessarily want to get into that, it tends to happen.

So just looking for those kinds of vehicles that would only necessarily require a judge's decision on a final agreed-upon settlement, kind of the paper stamp, it would be an interesting approach to look at, that would not sort of limit the role necessarily of lawyers and counsel but have kind of that third way for people who just want to get in and go through it and find out what they are entitled to, and some assistance in making the decisions over assets, et cetera, would be useful. So it is something I know I would be interested in pursuing and working on, because I think it is the next natural step in the

family law process. It certainly ties in to what the Minister has been talking about in terms of community justice.

I have a couple of specific issues that came to light, one from a constituent some years ago in the area of maintenance. I say to the Minister he will appreciate this also as a lawyer that sometimes we find that odd case where all the rules we put in place do not kind of make sense. This was one that was brought to my attention maybe five or six years ago. I remember writing to my colleague, the then Minister of Justice. I got the answer, which was the technically correct answer. We certainly did not make a movement in this area, but I just flag this for him. It is a rare instance. It is a case where a gentleman from my constituency and his wife were divorced. There were two children of the marriage. The wife moved away to the United States. There were obviously a lot of problems. I do not want to make it sound that all was rosy. But he had a maintenance or a support order for his children.

The age of the children, with whom he was not in contact—there are probably reasons for that, valid or otherwise. I will not debate, but when the child reached the age of majority, this individual still was required to pay maintenance. There was not any argument having to be made as to whether or not the child was still a child of the marriage in the legal sense of that, and he had no ability to find out if the child was still a child of the marriage, which would still require his maintenance support, because the child was out of the jurisdiction and there was not contact.

Maintenance, I gather, was being paid through maintenance enforcement. What he was saying was the child is now 18. If the child is not in school, if the child is working, I am not supposed to pay maintenance, but it continued to be deducted because the order was in place. I appreciate there are a lot of arguments on the other side about the way these things work, but it would sound to me that there has to be some point at which the obligation comes to an end. If there is the potential of the obligation continuing, i.e., still remaining a child of the marriage, being in school, et cetera, if the person paying does not have the physical means by which to investigate that because a person has

moved out of the jurisdiction, some onus should, of course, transfer to the person who controls the information.

What made this all the more difficult for the individual is it was an individual who was not working at a high-paying job, was living off a minimal amount of money. The support payments were being deducted off their cheque, and he did not have the money to hire a lawyer, and was still in debt over the separation and was rejected for legal aid. So he was in this most unenviable position of having to pay, having no ability to determine whether or not even the child was still alive.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I had put the question to the then Attorney General's office about what does that person do, and the response was, well, they need to go to court and have the order changed. It was sort of one of these impossible situations. So I just ask the Minister, I am not wanting to upset all the boats or maintenance enforcement, but it does sound to me, this kind of case, it did suggest to me that there has to be some reasonable onus that, if there is an order to pay, the child is the subject of that order, if there is no contact, that there at least has to be some right to determine that the child is still alive, that the child is no longer or is the child of the marriage, that the maintenance enforcement people have some obligation to do that.

Now, maybe they are doing that, and this was an isolated case. I do not know, but I wanted to raise it with the new minister to see if it is an area that at least could be looked at because there is some issues here, I think, in making a system work fairly.

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Of course, the requirement for a variation order is there, and it does then raise the issues of what information is available to the applicant and the availability of legal aid. The auto orders program can help to deal with this to a certain extent because then there will not be shortcomings in orders hopefully, but whether there may be some room to improve the

administrative scheme is a good question. I will take the Member's challenge, and perhaps we can discuss this in the next round of Estimates next year. Maybe we will have something, and I will ask the staff to look at options.

The issue is, though, whether by provincial or administrative scheme we could vary section 96 order is one question. I am just saying that these are challenges perhaps that we will meet and whether there are administrative ways to help gather information. If you leave that with us, we will scratch our heads, and I would not be surprised if there was among the maintenance staff a recognition that there is a pattern of concern here, but I do not want to prejudge that.

Mr. Praznik: I appreciate the comments of the Minister of Justice, and he appreciates that the people who have the onus to prove something have to have the ability to access the information with which to prove it. I would certainly appreciate his looking into that matter. Again, in the area of custody and access, one of the areas I have continually had a concern expressed to me, as I am sure he has over the years—and there is certainly a federal jurisdiction here as well, but that is an access to grandparents.

This is a difficult issue, I appreciate, because the parents can choose not to have their children see their grandparents if that is what they wish. The difficulty, of course, is when there is a separation and one parent has perhaps sole custody of that child, and I am not talking about cases where there may be proven abuse, et cetera, but I am talking about just the ability of a grandparent to be able to access a particularly young child on some regular basis. It is an area in which I have observed, I think, there is a growing recognition that some in the courts may need to be empowered in some way to make that part of the separation arrangements.

I am sure in many cases it is not an issue, but I have had a number of cases. There is one particularly who came out of Oakbank who did come to visit me some years ago, a very acrimonious separation, and there was a host of issues. One party, their child leaving the jurisdiction so access was limited, but the child with the mother was still there and denying

access to the grandparents. I just ask for the Minister's views on this. Is this a particular area that if one were to look at doing some improvements or reforming family laws, is this an area that he would feel would be worthy of having a look at? I know that it is not a black and white situation but one that he certainly would give some consideration to.

Mr. Mackintosh: As the Member knows, there is a joint overlapping responsibility from the federal and provincial governments on this, and generally the thinking that the federal government is going to have to take some lead on this one. Accordingly, a federal-provincial-territorial working group is currently studying this very issue of grandparent access. It may be that there will be some positive recommendations made. The FPT working group is looking for the input of different provinces on this issue as it develops a strategy for action.

Mr. Praznik: Perhaps the Minister could tell us what advice he will be offering this committee in this particular area, if he has had a chance to develop a position. I appreciate hundreds of issues on one's desk, he may not as of yet developed his own. Perhaps we are living with my administration's instruction to the Department. But I would like to get a sense, as I am sure many Manitobans would, of whether or not the Minister has had some thought of his own on this. I appreciate he may not have yet. If he has, what would that be?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just coincidentally today or yesterday recommendations have come forward that the provinces look at some kind of a consultative process to provide some input to the FPT working group. I think that it would be important to look at the options then as to what kind of a consultation should take place.

In terms of my own views, I can only say I am aware of the lobbying efforts of one organization that I was generally sympathetic to, but I also recognize that there may be circumstances where the general support may not be appropriate. I think, for example, of the Gonzales' experience in the United States and the difficulties there.

So I look forward to forming my views and the Government's approach on this one as a result of consultative process. We will turn our minds to that now, I imagine, in the next number of weeks.

* (17:00)

Mr. Praznik: I would just like to say to the Minister I fully appreciate, as I think that everyone would that what he is talking about is not an absolute right but the discretion of the court to grant, that there will be circumstances where it is not appropriate. There are circumstances where grandparents, by their action, may be a threat to the children, for whatever reason, or not be trustworthy to honour the arrangements.

What I think the push has been is at least to give the courts the authority and the discretion in appropriate cases where it is in the best interests of the child to have access to grandparents, and if there may be an acrimony between parents that does not allow that, that they would have some ability to do it.

My other question in the areas of maintenance and support to the Minister is a senator, I think it was Anne Cools in Ottawa, played a very leading role in, I think, trying to—again, the development of family law has been a progressive one from a system that was very, I think, unfair to women. We have come a long way in improving the equality and fair treatment, and I think that always should be our goal is fair treatment. But one of the issues that, of course, was flagged by the Senator was that, in many cases where access has been awarded and is not being respected by one parent, there is still an obligation to provide financial support, when the other part of the bargain has not been lived up to.

I would ask the minister if he has any thoughts or comments. I know it is a very difficult area, and there are a lot of views. Regrettably, most of the views are based on personal circumstances that are not good ones for the people involved. I respect that, but one also recognizes that there are mutual rights and obligations, and if they are not linked together in some way one can lose all one's rights on one side and still be a person who is having to live

up to obligations on another. I think that was the Senator's point, in fact, that there has to be perhaps some linking and reasonable circumstances, so that people, parents, whatever sex, have a right to access and see their children, unless, of course, for some reason that is not in the child's interest, and that has to go hand in hand and be linked to the financial support issue. So I ask the Minister if he has any thoughts in this particular area.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have heard many payor fathers use as the excuse for not making maintenance payments an allegation that the custodial parent was denying access or otherwise not abiding by a court order. I have always taken the view that the issue of child support cannot be tied, in a theoretical sense to start with, to the issue of custody and access issues or other interpersonal issues even between former partners, that the debt owing to children of a former marriage is the most important debt owing, in my view, and must be enforced by the most powerful tools and most efficient administrative structure that we can bring to bear.

Now, having said that, after hearing this as a pattern, I began to think that we also have to deal though with the challenge of ensuring compliance with court orders, by whoever, as a challenge, recognizing that your monetary and your financial obligations do not end with divorce. I think, as we develop more effective maintenance enforcement regimes, we do have to address, not as part and parcel of this one, but at the same time, ways to help to ensure that court orders are complied with.

In particular, I look at the potential of custody and access centres for one. There have been some developments recently in Manitoba with regard to those. In Ontario, there was a significant program there of custody and access centres to reduce the conflict that often arises, sometimes a reluctance by one partner to turn the children over to the other, whether there is an order or not. So those kinds of responses, I think, are appropriate.

As well, of course, there must always be meaningful consequences when court orders are not complied with by whomever. I recognize

that this is indeed a very difficult issue. I do not, though, in any way want to go along with the notion that maintenance payments should be tied to conduct on the part of the other person, but at the same time we have to recognize that these are challenges that must be dealt with. Across the country, there has been no consensus on how to deal with this challenge, and across the United States, there has been no consensus.

I also think, too, when we look at issues of maintenance enforcement, sometimes we have to go beyond just the written words in the order and look at the relative needs of the parties, whether there are employment needs or other. So I understand the debate and the Senator's views on this one, but I do caution myself ever and anyone that I speak to against tying one to the other.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Praznik: I thank the Minister, and I certainly appreciate the difficulty of this issue. I wanted to get his sense of his views on it, and am pleased that at least I think he recognizes it is important that all orders be enforced. I think we both understand that one hears stories, but the truth sometimes is always in the middle, that there are always two sides to the positions people find themselves in.

By and large, those are the questions I had in the area of Family Law, except for one. I would ask if the Minister, in the interests of health actually, would be prepared to have 10- or 15-minute recess so that we could use the washroom and refresh ourselves. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: The Committee has agreed to a short recess. How long? Okay, 5:15 p.m.

The Committee recessed at 5:07 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 5:24 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: We will continue with our Estimates.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we are getting through our list. I gather tomorrow we will deal with the

correctional officers issue. Hopefully we will be able to get through most of this.

I have some questions now just around the 911 emergency issue in Winnipeg. I appreciate that most of this is within the purview of others, but as the chief law enforcement officer of the Province, I am assuming, perhaps wrongly, but I am assuming that the Minister's Department has had some contact with the City of Winnipeg on this issue to ensure that things are in order. I know there is an investigation, report going on.

I would just like to give the Minister the opportunity, to where he is comfortable, to put some comments on the record as to what can be publicly said at this time to ensure Manitobans, Winnipeggers, that their 911 system is working, after the very regrettable death. Whether that death was the result of some failure in the 911. I do not want to make that accusation. I have been around long enough to know that there are always many sides to a story, but I think it is an area that the Attorney General may want to provide some comment on. I appreciate it may be limited.

Mr. Mackintosh: There is information that I have to indicate that the report prepared by the City of Winnipeg Police Service has been referred now to the RCMP for review and recommendations or suggestions for further investigation.

When we receive the report back from the RCMP we will refer it to the City of Winnipeg for any further action that may be warranted. Simultaneously we will send that to former Commissioner Norman Inkster. It is our expectation then that by the time Mr. Inkster forwards his findings or recommendations back to us he will also have the City of Winnipeg's follow-up to the RCMP investigation. We will forward that to the City of Winnipeg as well.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I appreciate only certain things may be able to be said publicly at this time pending the results. I would like to ask the Attorney General, as I did in the House when this was an issue, really two questions. I will be comfortable with the answer to the second depending, I guess, on the answer to the first

only because if the answer is one way, the second may be not a relevant question.

The first question is: Are the Minister and his senior staff aware of the contents of the report sufficiently to—and the second question is—satisfy themselves that as of today, at least, the public should have a comfort level with 911. I could be asking for all the details, which the Minister may not be prepared to give me. I would just like to know, and I have enough respect for the Minister as colleagues that if the Minister is able to say today that he has an understanding of the contents and that he is satisfied to his satisfaction as Attorney General that, at least on a temporary basis, steps have been taken to give the public confidence in 911, I will accept that and ask no more questions, because I have respect for him as a colleague, and we should have respect for the office of Attorney General as well. I think that would satisfy my inquiry. If he has not been privy to this information, et cetera, then, of course, he cannot answer the second question. I do not expect him to say more than that unless he is prepared to do so.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Chief of Police has requested that the RCMP review the Winnipeg Police Service's report before it is sent to my office. On the analysis, and I think a proper one, the report really is incomplete until the RCMP at least review it. I might just say as well, though, and this is likely known to the Member, that the primary concern here is the integrity of the double homicide investigation and prosecution. We have to be mindful of that when looking at whether any information contained in the report can be released publicly. The Prosecutions branch, I might add, will also be asked by my office and Mr. Inkster to review the report and the RCMP response to determine whether there is a basis for any criminal proceedings.

* (17:30)

Mr. Praznik: I recognize all of those things, and I do not want the Attorney General to put in jeopardy the prosecution. My real concern is that, is the Attorney General and his Department satisfied that as of today, without giving detail, but to his satisfaction and that of his officials,

that the 911 system in Winnipeg is reliable, relatively reliable, to its users.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Department and my office will be in a position to provide an answer to that question when we receive the response from the RCMP, and the RCMP, I understand, just received that report last week.

Mr. Praznik: It is just for clarification. I would not want the answer of the Attorney General to leave the impression that Winnipeggers should not be today confident in their 911 system. I just wonder who ultimately here should be giving them at least a sense of confidence in a temporary way. There may be long-term problems there that have to be fixed. There may be none at all, but at least in the interim basis, with as much certainty as one can, on an interim basis, give at the least the public some confidence that one can reasonably expect the system today is functional. Whether it always has been, you know, is an issue that will come out. It is just to give a comfort level to the public today that there is a confidence today in that interim matter in that system.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that broader issues than the 911 system of the City of Winnipeg is actually being covered by a different report, and that is one that is being prepared by committee chaired by Councillor Gerbasi. I understand that they are looking at other patterns and how the system functions and will be reporting—and they are also considering the City's approach to domestic violence. I can make inquiries to determine if there is now an expected time line for reporting by that committee. I appreciate, because the 911 system questions are within the ambit of the City of Winnipeg, that this is an appropriate way to proceed and, hopefully, assure Winnipeggers that the 911 system is there to help protect them. But I can make some inquiries and let the Member know when the report of that committee is expected, which, as I understand it, will deal with the issue raised by the Member.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the difficulty in which the Attorney General finds himself in this area as I do as well. I certainly do not want to be in any way by my questions jeopardizing the prosecution or the work that is

going on, so, if the Minister has undertaken, I understand, to make those inquiries and provide me with that information, I certainly will accept that.

A difficult area here, and I am glad that the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has joined us, because it is an issue that I think is one that is worthy of discussion. I would like to move into that, and that is the area of gang policy. I have no objection if the Minister would like to join in these Estimates because I think there is that issue that has arisen from the Minister's comments last year—well, in fairness to the Minister, in a taping that was made in his capacity as an MLA prior to his becoming a minister of Cabinet. It certainly aired after he had become a minister of Cabinet and some of the initiatives that were taken by the Attorney General.

I think the public wants to have a sense of—maybe two sides to the same coin. The Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs made some very strong statements in reference to the way in which gang activity was, in fact, being handled and certainly offered his viewpoint, I would gather, as an MLA. That is the way I took it. There are some things that he, in fact, said that I would, from my own experience, say perhaps there is some credence there. We have seen the Minister take a very, I think, solid position on crackdown on gangs and activities and those things, which, I think, the public welcomed. They welcomed generally things that happened under previous administrations, welcomed this.

There are concerns on the other side, and I do not want to just point to the Minister because many of the comments that he had made I have heard from others in the First Nations community. So there is clearly a difference of view as to whether or not a tough anti-gang position and activity by the Department is required or is an overreaction and perhaps based on stereotyping or other things. It is a policy dilemma.

Now perhaps the ministers would like to reconcile that for me perhaps and to the public. Perhaps it is two stiff sides of the same coin, perhaps for other things, but it is an outstanding question of direction and policy that I think is

there. I know this happens from time to time in government, and I would like the Attorney General, perhaps the Minister, to comment for the edification of the public.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is one of the main thrusts of the Government to intensify, if not to provide, and ensure greater specialization in how we deal with organized crime. In that regard it is not just a matter of one particular type of organized crime, but all organized crime. Across the country organized crime is changing very quickly, becoming much more sophisticated. It is engaging in different kinds of activities, and I think is certainly becoming a greater threat to the well-being and safety of Canadians.

In this province, we believe it is important that the justice system response level, which unfortunately is often or usually after the fact, that we have in place a developing cadre of officials who become particularly attuned to the dynamics of the language, the structure, the players in organized crime. At the same time, we recognize that dealing with crime can only be one part of the equation in making the community safer. So we know that it is important to have targeted prevention and education strategies and, as well, deal with the broader systemic issues that often cause or lead to risk factors and may eventually lead to criminal activity.

On that side of the equation, we have moved very quickly to put in place a considered examination of the AJI report with a view to bringing to government the practical and longer-term changes by way of recommendation, so that we can deal with, in this particular case, aboriginal justice, which is only one part of the one side of the balance that, mind you, is an important one in our mind and I think in the minds of most Manitobans.

At the same time, generally the Government is embarking on activities to target opportunities for youth and other people who have been left out of the economy so that we can heed the words of Ted Hughes when he looked at the big picture solution to the Headingley riot. We have to ensure that there are marketable skills and job opportunities. When it comes to youth, it is not just that but also recreational, cultural and

educational opportunities that can make a big difference for individuals.

So it is a balanced approach we are bringing. It is one that will be, I believe, more effective, efficient, more timely and targeted on the suppression side, and as well more targeted and specialized on the prevention side.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am interested in the comments of the Minister on the nature of organized crime in Manitoba and how it is changing. I certainly would agree with him, from my recollections at Cabinet discussions, of attorneys general over the years commenting on it. I have not served in that portfolio and my information is not recent, but I think it would be a good opportunity to put on the record some discussion about where we are with organized crime, what kind of organized crime activity do we have in Manitoba, and its nature and how, in fact, it is changing. I would find very interesting the comments of the Minister, for my own edification and education.

Mr. Mackintosh: The two main targets and concerns that are current, recognizing this can change all very rapidly, is with regard to biker gangs and street gangs. I think that is a commonly recognized concern on the part of Manitobans.

Mr. Praznik: With respect to the Minister talking about organized crime, certainly I guess anytime you have a number of individuals who form an organization and commit criminal activity, it is organized crime, but I think the public's expectation of that definition is that you are talking about things that are greater than just some small petty thefts or relatively small amounts.

The public impression of the words "organized crime" are those dealing with significant theft rings, drug rings, money laundering and a host of other things. So the kind of criminal activity that the Minister is talking about by both biker gangs and street gangs, perhaps he could elucidate somewhat as to what we are talking about in terms of the criminal activity.

* (17:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: The types of criminal activity are always developing and changing. Indeed, of significant concern to myself being the relatively recent activity in regard to crack cocaine in Manitoba. I know from my experiences in researching the issue of street gangs in the midwest of the United States, when crack cocaine came into the market where there were street gangs in a relatively loose fashion existing, the street gangs became much more organized and sophisticated and entrenched.

I think it is very important that we move as quickly as we can on both the evidentiary and intelligence side of the equation to share information across the divisions of the Justice Department and law enforcement officials, including in the jails and community corrections, at the same time, to put in place a program to keep, not just kids, but adults out of gangs.

Of course, in addition to drug trafficking, organized crime in Manitoba has been typified by prostitution-related activity, and as well auto theft, those being predominant activities.

The issue of recruitment is an important one. We have brought to the federal-provincial table the suggestion and the urging that the Criminal Code criminalize recruitment. That has been well-received, and that is developing now. That should provide, of course, not only the basic of expressing the community standard but the ability of community and officials to deal with recruitment. That includes recruitment in our correctional facilities.

Mr. Praznik: Could the Minister give us a sense of the extent of those activities and their increase perhaps, in whatever statistics he uses, dollar value of drugs hitting the streets in Manitoba? I do not know the tools by which he measures this increased activity. We know there has been a significant increase in auto thefts. Perhaps the Minister could provide us with some statistics on that for this discussion.

Mr. Mackintosh: Some of the information that is being requested has been made available to the general public. There are regular publications, for example, that identify the kind and extent of activity of criminal organizations in Canada as a whole.

As well, I, as a Minister, for one, have been presented with presentations by those, at the federal level who specialize in criminal organizations and their activities across the country. Much of that information has been classified or characterized by law enforcement officials as generally confidential. But what I will undertake to do for the Member, it is important that he get a sense as best as can be available publicly of the extent of the activity of criminal organizations in Canada. We can endeavour to do that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, what I am trying to get a handle on—the Minister I am sure will appreciate it—if I was the outgoing attorney general and had been privy to those briefings, I probably would not be asking these questions. I am coming in as a non-attorney general. What I am trying to get a sense of is the increased—I don't expect confidential information that could in any way prohibit law enforcement, but I am trying to get, in laymen's terms, some sense of how we measure this increased activity, because we have seen a very significant clampdown or initiative by the Minister to deal with gang activity.

We have a Cabinet colleague who says that is really an overreaction. Perhaps I am not describing his comments correctly. What I am trying to get a sense of is what is the problem we are trying to deal with in this area? What is the extent of how we measure it?

There are a number of views. They are represented by two views at the Cabinet table, I would gather. The public would like to know where, in fact, this is shaking out, in essence. So I am trying to get from the Minister, in this discussion, some sense to tell us that we know that we have 5000 more people involved in gangs, that they are selling or have brought into this Province \$3 million more of crack cocaine than a few years ago, or our auto thefts are up 28 percent and we have this growing market in hot auto parts, to get a sense of the problem that the Minister has tackled with his initiatives, because if, in fact, the problem is not there in a way that the public can grasp then perhaps this has been an overreaction, as the other minister has suggested in his comments last year. So I am trying to get a sense on what it is.

Perhaps there are aspects to this that meld the two positions very nicely. I just would like to understand.

Mr. Mackintosh: The annual crime statistics will be released by Statistics Canada's Centre for Justice Statistics next month. As well, CISM has an annual report and deals with Manitoba in that one. We can look for that for the Member.

As well, the reported number of known and active street gang members in Winnipeg has grown from just a few hundred in 1994 to I understand about 1700 today in the city of Winnipeg alone. Outside of Winnipeg, the RCMP are reporting that known street gang membership is approximately 450, as I recall, and they also report anecdotally that the street gang activity outside of Winnipeg has grown noticeably in the last two or three or so years. So those are some measurements that are known. I might add, though, that the increase in the number of known street gang members will be in part due to better information but largely due to recruitment and more activity.

Mr. Praznik: I appreciate, Mr. Chair, the Minister does not have a registry of street gang members with which to gather this information, or there is one?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the Member should know that there is indeed a registry of street gang members and the members are listed according to a six-point criteria. Also, under that criteria, the individuals can be taken off the active list when they do not meet that criteria.

Mr. Praznik: So, just to understand that, then, in 1994 there were just a few hundred on the street gang registry for Winnipeg or estimated to be; today there are some 1700 on that list? That would be an accurate, and, estimated, there would be some 400 outside of Winnipeg. Would that be correct?

Mr. Mackintosh: As I recall, the RCMP had reported, I think, about 450 or between 400 and 500 that were known outside of Winnipeg. I think it is fair to say that the information available to the RCMP will only grow now with the coming into play of the gang awareness unit and working with communities so that we will

be better able to identify gang activity throughout the province.

* (17:50)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, some years ago I remember we had a major, what would be the term for it? incident at the Waterhen First Nation where a split in the community resulted in a particular group physically and under power of firearms taking over the community, sending the other group out, barricades going up, the RCMP doing a siege, in essence, over a number of weeks.

The result, of course, I think a relatively peaceful ending to that in that there was not loss of life. In the course of that dispute and that incident, I believe a number of homes were burned, including that of the chief, and I understand as well that charges were laid against several people in that situation. It is my understanding that convictions were obtained for the number of people out of that incident, that several, if not all of those convictions, were appealed to the Court of Appeal where the Court of Appeal upheld the convictions.

I would like to ask the Attorney General today: Have those appeals that have been upheld by our Court of Appeal, has an application been made to appeal them to the Supreme Court of Canada?

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my information from the Department that the matter is currently before the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Praznik: May I ask, just again by process, not to jeopardize a matter before the courts, but if they are before the Supreme Court, could the Department provide me with a list of those cases that have been appealed to the Supreme Court? Has the Supreme Court, by way of process, granted leave to appeal, or are they just applications for leave to appeal?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am advised that the merits are before the court.

Mr. Praznik: So I gather in the Minister's statement that they are seeking leave to appeal. They have been granted leave to appeal.

Mr. Mackintosh: No, the merits are before the court and the leave has either already been granted or they have the appeal there as of right.

Mr. Praznik: Will the Minister undertake to provide me with a list of those cases?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mr. Praznik: Will the Minister tell us whether or not his department will be making representation at the Supreme Court on the issues at hand?

Mr. Mackintosh: Manitoba will be there, and we are a respondent. I understand that the written factums have been filed and that argument is being scheduled for as early as the next few weeks I understand.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, given that convictions were obtained by the Prosecutions branch, I gather, and the Minister may correct me, that his department argued the case against the appeals in the Court of Appeal where the appeals were not upheld. Given that there is an issue now before the Supreme Court of Canada, will the Minister confirm that his department will, in fact, be arguing to ensure that those convictions are, in fact, maintained?

Mr. Mackintosh: We will confirm the current status of the case and advise the Member of that. There are some questions as to different procedures and motions, and we will advise the Member of the position of the Department.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, given that this matter is coming before the court very shortly, there is some urgency to an answer to my question. Also, and the Minister, I think, will appreciate this, as a lawyer, I would love to know what the issues are.

I appreciate that perhaps we do not want to have that discussion necessarily over the microphones in the Committee. If the Department tomorrow afternoon could provide me with a short synopsis of the issues and the process, it would be immeasurably helpful. It is matters of public record, but it would be useful to know what issue is before the Supreme Court and may, in fact, make a difference in the

questions that I ask. So, if the Minister would undertake to perhaps have that provided to me, it does not have to be elaborate, perhaps we could discuss this tomorrow further in our Estimates.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can undertake to provide the Member with that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, that would be most useful.

Mr. Chair, the hour is drawing very close to six o'clock, and there are other areas in which to pursue. I do not think we are going to have long. My list is getting shorter, but I certainly enjoy the exchange. Perhaps, if there is a will to call it six o'clock, then we will see everyone tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the Committee to call it six o'clock? *[Agreed]*

It is 6 p.m.; the Committee shall rise.

LABOUR

* (14:30)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Labour. Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 129 of the Estimates book: Resolution 11.1, Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$500,100.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I have a couple of questions of the Minister in regard to finding out, for clarity's sake, where they fall within her department.

The first one is to the Minister through you, Madam Chair. Under which act does unpaid family leave fall?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Under the Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Schuler: Through you to the Minister, where does the enforcement of labour standards on First Nations reserves fall?

Ms. Barrett: Generally speaking, those kinds of issues are federal in jurisdiction, but in the case of a provincially governed firm, for example, that would be doing work on a First Nation, then the provincial Employment Standards Code would apply.

Mr. Schuler: I would, through you, like to ask the Minister: Where would one find the Minimum Wage Board and other provisions relating to the minimum wage in your statutory responsibilities?

Ms. Barrett: Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair through you, where would one find employee benefits? Under which of the statutory responsibilities?

Ms. Barrett: The provincial government employees benefits would be under The Civil Service Act which, as we discussed yesterday, is a separate item in the Estimates and will be debated in the Chamber in its order.

Mr. Schuler: What about holiday time off, would that be also under The Civil Service Act?

Ms. Barrett: For provincial government employees it would be again the civil service under the Civil Service Commission. In the case of all other workers in Manitoba it would be the Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister just repeat the last part of her answer.

Ms. Barrett: Yes. For workers who are not civil servants the Employment Standards Code is the operative piece of legislation.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister. If your government were to follow the lead of Lionel Jospin, the socialist Prime Minister of France, and substantially shorten the work week, which act or acts would need to be amended? Do you want that again?

Ms. Barrett: Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Schuler: With respect to the collection of statistics on the various components of your department, like union density, that is, the

percentage of the workforce that is unionized, and the number of violations for certain things, how is that collected?

Ms. Barrett: The union density would be under the Research division. The other statistics, other information would be gathered by the various divisions of the Department that would be responsible for those kinds of things, such as workplace safety and health issues would be under Workplace Safety and Health, Employment Standards, et cetera.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister: Where and how is this data made available to the public?

Ms. Barrett: The Research branch periodically sends the union information to the Manitoba Federation of Labour and business groups. The annual report is the site for much of the other statistical information that the Member is asking about. It is, as well, available on our Web site.

* (14:50)

Mr. Schuler: I have a few questions to the Minister on Executive Support. We did touch on this briefly the last time we met. I ask the Minister to bear with me and I will work through the question.

Does the Minister, seeing as she is co-chair of the Competition Committee of the Treasury Board, actively solicit or receive policy advice from the Treasury Board or its employees in regard to her department?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: So the Minister does not then consider the Treasury Board to be a client group of the Department of Labour.

Ms. Barrett: Would the Member please repeat that question again? Sorry.

Mr. Schuler: So the Minister does not then consider the Treasury Board to be a client group of the Department of Labour.

Ms. Barrett: Absolutely not. The Treasury Board is a distinct entity that I believe is under

the Department of Finance and is the arm of the— I must preface my comments by saying that I am not the Minister responsible for Treasury Board, which is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). Treasury Board is a separate entity that works with each department in establishing the Estimates processes, that has a handle on the financial situation in each of the departments. Every department works with Treasury Board on occasion to talk about the financial implications, the money issues, that sort of thing.

I have no direct link or any responsibility directly to Treasury Board nor does Treasury Board to me. The joint Compensation Committee is co-chaired by myself, but the Department of Labour is not linked any more closely to Treasury Board than any other department is.

Mr. Schuler: So, then, again, the Minister co-chairs the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board. Does she receive any policy advice or any advice in regard to labour from the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board or from the Treasury Board or any of its employees?

Ms. Barrett: Not necessarily in the way that we have been talking about advice that has been given to myself from groups that we were speaking of yesterday. As I stated, Treasury Board works with every single department when each department is working on the Estimates process which culminates in the Budget and then again in the detailed Estimates that we are going through now.

So, no, Treasury Board is not a client of mine. It is an independent group in the sense that it reports through the Minister of Finance, but it works with every single department on financial issues.

Mr. Schuler: So, then, as the Minister of Labour, what kind of advice does she get from the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board or the Treasury Board or its employees?

Ms. Barrett: The Compensation Committee provides advice to various departments on labour-related issues, compensation-related issues. So it is compensation issues. It will work

with government on negotiations that are underway, that kind of thing, but it does not provide advice to me nor do I seek advice in my ongoing role as Minister of Labour. So this, again, is more a civil service situation.

Mr. Schuler: I would then like to ask the Minister: Does her department receive any advice or policy advice from the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board or from Treasury Board or from any of its employees?

Ms. Barrett: No, to the first, Compensation Committee. The Treasury Board and the employees of Treasury Board, I believe—and, again, I am open to correction from staff on this, but my understanding, as we went through the budgeting process, is there is a Treasury Board staff or staffpersons, singular or plural, who are assigned to work with each of the Government departments.

They work with the senior staff in the Department looking at the programs that the Department of Labour would like to implement, would like to have ongoing, and they ask very good questions about the costing of this and the elements of it.

They do research on what the various departments would like to have happen. They are the fiscal arm of the Estimates and budgeting process, but they are civil servants, and, as I said, they are assigned to various government departments.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee who is the person that is assigned to the Labour Department?

Ms. Barrett: Sorry, would you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee who is the person that is assigned to the Labour Department?

Ms. Barrett: The Treasury Board analyst assigned to the Department of Labour is a gentleman named Doug Mulder.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you for that, Madam Minister. This individual is the liaison between

the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board/Treasury Board and the Department of Labour.

Ms. Barrett: No, he is the link between Treasury Board and Labour. The Compensation Committee that the Member is referring to is a very separate committee that deals with compensation issues that arise for which the Government has financial responsibility, and it deals with those issues.

What Treasury Board does and what Mr. Mulder as our link does with the Department of Labour is that he helps co-ordinate the Estimates review, the quarterly cash flow, the year-end variances, analyses of programs and projects and that sort of thing. If we wanted to add or to subtract some programs during the year, we would go to the Treasury Board for that as well. So Mr. Mulder helps us manage the financial side and plan for the financial side of the budgeting process and for the maintenance of the good financial management during the year.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister through you, Madam Chair, as I am sure you are aware, there are several individuals at Treasury Board with some history involvement in the New Democratic Party. Mr. Lloyd Schreyer has run as a candidate for the NDP, and Mr. David Woodbury, I believe, has been employed by the New Democrats in Ottawa. The question is—you do not consult these individuals, who, I am sure, have something to say about labour policy, about the direction of policy in your department.

I will state the question again: Do you consult these individuals about the direction of policy in your department?

Ms. Barrett: No.

* (15:00)

Mr. Schuler: So again to the Minister, she is saying that she does not rely on the services of these two individuals, in particular, or anyone else from Treasury Board.

Ms. Barrett: I have tried to explain, and I will try it one more time. The role of Treasury Board is to work with the individual departments.

There is an analyst that is assigned in the case of Labour, one analyst—in the case of a department like Health, it is probably a number of analysts—assigned by Treasury Board to work with the departments of Labour. They are civil servants. They work for whichever government is in power at the time. They work on the cash flow. They work on quarterly analysis. They work on making sure that the Estimates process goes forward, the financial part of that. They will raise issues. They will do research and get information about how much a program might cost or raise those financial concerns because that is their expertise.

An absolutely essential portion of the governing process is to ensure that the ministers and the departments know what the financial implications are of things that they are proposing. Through Treasury Board, they have a handle on each of the departments in total.

I would like to ask the Member if he has actually responded to Mr. Schreyer's letter concerning his egregious behaviour in sharing with the public Mr. Schreyer's social insurance number. Mr. Schreyer is the Secretary to the Cabinet Committee on compensation, totally divorced from the regular operations of Treasury Board.

Mr. Woodbury works for Treasury Board but has absolutely no link in his work to the Department of Labour, and Treasury Board, in and of itself, links with the Department, as I said, quarterly analysis, cash flows, Estimates processes.

Mr. Schuler: Would Mr. Mulder focus just on Labour, or would he be involved with multiple ministries?

Ms. Barrett: Because Treasury Board is housed in the Department of Finance, the specific answer could come from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). Traditionally, for smaller departments, like the Department of Labour, Mr. Mulder might have one or two other departments that he works with. As I said, in a department the size of Health or Education, there are probably a number of Treasury Board analysts who deal only with that one department. It depends on the size of the department.

Mr. Schuler: So, again to the Minister, is she saying that she does not rely on the services or the advice of either Mr. Lloyd Schreyer or Mr. David Woodbury?

Ms. Barrett: Lloyd Schreyer is the Secretary to the Cabinet Committee on compensation. We work with him on issues of compensation for the Government of Manitoba, dealing with the civil service collective agreement, dealing with health care collective agreements, these kinds of things. That is Mr. Schreyer's role.

Mr. Woodbury works for Treasury Board. In his work life, he has no relationship with the Department of Labour.

Mr. Schuler: Does Mr. David Woodbury have anything to do with the Compensation Committee of Treasury Board that the Minister is co-chair of?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister through you Madam Chair, does the Minister rely on the services or on any policy advice of anyone in particular in Treasury Board other than Mr. Doug Mulder?

Ms. Barrett: To the Member, currently we deal with Mr. Mulder, but Mr. Mulder, as I have said, is one of many Treasury Board analysts, and it may be that we will deal with a different Treasury Board analyst at some point in time.

But at this point in time, to work with the department on the Estimates process and the cash flows and those kinds of things that I have spoken of earlier, we are working with Mr. Mulder.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Schuler: I would like to welcome the new individual to the Chair. I hope he sticks around a little longer than he did yesterday.

Yesterday the Minister indicated to the Committee—we had asked about statutory responsibilities of the Minister of Labour—and she told us that The Department of Labour Act

basically came under general. I believe that is right, and I cannot find it. I was wondering if at this time I could ask the Minister some questions on labour.

I would like to ask her, just for clarification, section 3 part 2 of The Labour Act speaks about the Minister may designate a person employed in the Department as an inspector. Can the Minister explain how this process works?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

* (15:10)

Ms. Barrett: The Department will send a job posting with job requirements through to the Civil Service Commission, which then undergoes the normal civil service hiring process. An individual then will be hired as an employee of the Department of Labour through that civil service process. Then, once that employee has been hired as an employee of the Department of Labour, they become an inspector upon my signing, as Minister of Labour, an authorization for that individual to be able to have the rights, responsibilities and powers given to the inspectors under the legislation.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee: What are the qualifications for a person that is employed as an inspector?

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask the Member if it would be acceptable for me to table the job delineation, qualifications and specifications for an inspector. There are several kinds of inspectors. There are inspectors in Employment Standards, Workplace Safety and Health, Fire Commissioner's office, Mechanical and Engineering. All of those job classifications have a range of requirements, so it would probably be most effective if we were to table for the Member's perusal those different job specifications.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee approximately when those could be tabled?

Ms. Barrett: Yes. If it is a representative sampling that would be acceptable to the Member, we could probably provide that

tomorrow. If it is each and every inspector classification, that will take several days because there are a number of them in various of the department's divisions.

Mr. Schuler: We would be willing to wait several days. Just on that are there any security checks that these individuals have to go through?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, we follow, in the Department of Labour, the standard procedures followed by most other departments, and we do background reference checks.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee how many inspectors she has within her department?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I would not have that information available at this point. But, if it is acceptable to the Member, I will table that specific information at the same time as I table the job classifications asked for earlier.

Mr. Schuler: That sounds good. I would like to ask the Minister, through you, Madam Chair, if she would refer to section 4, which refers to the Appointment of Vice-Chairman to boards and it reads, Appointment of Vice-Chairman to boards—

Ms. Barrett: Point of order.

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: Yes, a question for clarification. From what is the Member reading section 4 of?

Mr. Schuler: I would say the Minister has a point of order, and I will give her exactly what I am reading from.

Madam Chairperson: There is no point of order.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Could the Member clarify the information?

Mr. Schuler: From The Department of Labour Act, I am reading from page 3, "Appointment of vice-chairman to boards. 4 Where under any of

the Acts administered by the Minister, any person or body has power to appoint or establish a board or committee, that person or body may appoint a person who may be an officer, employee of the department as vice-chairman of that board or committee."

To the Minister: Is this usually the case with the different bodies under your jurisdiction? *[interjection]* Basically, it says that the vice-chairman of any particular board may be an officer or employee of the Department. The question again is: Is this usually the case with the different bodies under your jurisdiction?

Ms. Barrett: I am informed by staff that The Department of Labour Act is a very old act. As I have stated earlier, since becoming Minister I have made a commitment to reviewing all pieces of legislation, so this act will come under review.

Not all of the boards, as a matter of fact probably a minority of the boards that are in the Department of Labour actually would come under this piece of legislation. For example, going back to page 8 of the Estimates book to the Statutory Responsibilities. The Construction Industry Wages Act has a board, The Electricians' and The Elevator Act has a board. The Gas and Oil Burner Act has a board. At any rate, The Power Engineers Act, et cetera, and The Workplace Safety and Health—let us go to Workplace Safety and Health because that is the biggest one.

Workplace Safety and Health has a couple of boards that are under it, so they would fall under that act not The Labour Act. It is not very clear. I do not know exactly which boards. I would have to get that information. But of the boards that I am responsible for under the various pieces of legislation that I am responsible for, those various pieces of legislation would tell me what my rights and responsibilities are vis-à-vis the various boards that come under that individual legislation. The Labour Act would refer to a small number of boards. Yes, I would then have the authority, whether I choose to use it or not, to appoint a member of the Department as the vice-chair of that board.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee, Madam Chair, what boards actually do fall under this particular act currently?

Ms. Barrett: We will have to table that information.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell us approximately when she would see her department tabling that information?

* (15:20)

Ms. Barrett: We will table that at the same time as we are tabling the other information requested by the Member.

Mr. Schuler: The fact that you have an officer who is an employee of the Department, is this usually the case with the different bodies under your jurisdiction?

Ms. Barrett: I would suggest that the Member ask that question, as we have spoken about earlier, when we get to the various sections under which the various pieces of legislation occur, so that we can have that information available.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee, is it regular practice that the chairman of the Board also happens to be an officer as well as an employee of the Department?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I will ensure that we get the information on those specific boards at the same time. We will put the whole package together for the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Insofar as The Department of Labour Act, when was it proposed and when was the last time it was amended, if it was, in fact, amended?

Ms. Barrett: This act would have been originally enacted I believe in 1940. It is the Act which gave birth to—I am going to use that analogy for the Member—the Department of Labour. *[interjection]* Sorry. I got slightly sidetracked there. So, approximately 1940 would have been the time that this legislation was first enacted, but the date would specifically be

whenever the Department of Labour came into being. I believe, according to the heading of the legislation that I have, that probably the last time that it was amended was 1987. So it does require another look.

Mr. Schuler: Every time the Minister brings up that particular topic, you know, another baby story just wants to be told here, Minister. You have to be careful. I would like to point out to her that The Labour Act I do not think produced nearly the kind of beautiful things that were produced about a week and a day ago.

Minister, I have to tell you that the labour of about a week and a day ago produced just the most beautiful little baby. Corina is doing fine, thank you for asking. She is actually letting me get some sleep. She goes to bed at 12:30 and gets up at 5:30 for her little breakfast. I keep telling her I am falling in love with her. I am going to have a love affair with her. She is just the most beautiful little creature you have ever seen. But, anyway, you keep bringing it up, and, you know, it has been a while since I have seen her, so these stories are going to happen.

Back to The Labour Act. You have mentioned on numerous occasions, not just to this Committee but also outside of this Committee that you are proposing all kinds of changes. You mentioned to this Committee, in particular, that The Labour Act, as what we are quoting right now, that there will be changes to this, or did I misunderstand that? Are you proposing changes to the Department of Labour act?

Ms. Barrett: I have stated on many occasions that we will be reviewing every piece of legislation for which I am responsible. So I will be reviewing The Labour Act, as I will be reviewing all pieces of legislation in the Department of Labour. I cannot tell the Member the time frame for the conclusion of any review, nor can I, at this point, say if there would be any changes.

I can tell you right now, looking at section 4, there will be a language change in the heading. It currently says "Appointment of vice-chairman to boards." Anywhere in the legislation that I am responsible for that language will be changed to

gender neutral. But the rest of the substance of the legislation, we will await a review in the fullness of time.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister see any of these potential post changes coming for the end of this session?

Ms. Barrett: Certainly not to The Labour Act.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister mentioned that she is reviewing a lot of areas within her department. Is she planning on introducing changes to legislation or planning on introducing any other legislation than that that has already been introduced in this current session?

Ms. Barrett: I would just suggest to the Member that he await the Introduction of Bills section in the Chamber daily for that information. Final decisions have not been made in all cases. So we are going to just say that when we are ready to make a public announcement about any legislative changes, we will do that in the Chamber.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister then indicated that she will be tabling whether any chairman of any board happens to be an employee as well as being an officer on a board. That was going to be tabled. Is that correct?

Ms. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to move to page 5 of The Department of Labour Act, and the subheading is "Authority for grants." It is item 6(2): "The Minister of Finance, on the requisition of the minister, may from and out of the Consolidated Fund with monies authorized under an Act of the Legislature to be so paid and applied, make grants to organizations, groups or persons for the purpose of (a) promoting or encouraging employment and employment opportunities within the province; or (b) promoting and encouraging education and training related to employment and employment opportunities within the province; or (c) promoting and encouraging research and study related to employment and employer-employee relations within the province; or (d) assisting in the orientation and training of immigrants to the province; or (e) providing support services for

any of the matters referred to in clauses (a) to (d); or (f) any or all of the matters referred to in clauses (a) to (e)."

My question to the Minister is: Does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) consult the Minister of Labour when such grants are made?

Ms. Barrett: The process for financial dealings through various departments, each department is a consultative one to a greater or lesser extent. Through the Estimates process, we look as a government at the Estimates of each department.

The specifics of this 6.(2) is the Minister of Finance or his designate writes the cheques. I mean it is the Department of Finance that sends out the money. You pay your driver's licence money to the Minister of Finance, that kind of thing. So that is my understanding of the role of the Minister of Finance. Again, this legislation, this section is enabling so that, if the department wanted to give a grant out to one of these organizations that are listed here, then it would go through the Estimates process. It would be part of our plan, and then it would go to the Treasury Board; it would go to Cabinet discussions. It would go through the normal process.

This is the section that enables the Department to give grants in that regard, and my reading of this section says that the Minister of Finance would be the group that would actually send a cheque out.

We do have one grant—maybe answering a question the Member has not asked for yet—to the Community Unemployed Help Centre in the amount of \$10,000, and that is going to be found in this section we are talking about. The grants, other expenditures there on page 21, that is the grant there. It is for \$10,000 for the Community Unemployed Help Centre. My understanding is that the cheque would be signed by the Minister of Finance, but it would come out of our budget.

* (15:30)

Mr. Schuler: Would the grants contained in these Estimates be considered under this section of the Act?

Ms. Barrett: I believe I just answered that question in the affirmative.

Mr. Schuler: Are grants for other purposes still allowed if they are not part of this section 6(2)?

Ms. Barrett: This section 6(2) is the only section in The Labour Act that refers to or enables the Department to give out grants. I would suggest that the Member raise this issue again when we talk about each of the individual pieces of legislation under their appropriate heading.

Mr. Schuler: Under this particular act the authority for grants, and it lists a whole bunch of criteria, is there a grant application that one can get to apply for grants under this particular act?

Ms. Barrett: No, this is an enabling section so that it would enable the Department to provide a grant to an organization or community group. My understanding is that it has not been used in the past very many times, and it has virtually always been used as a result of a request from a group for funding. So it is a not very often used part of the legislation.

Mr. Schuler: The grant for \$10,000, how was that particular grant triggered?

Ms. Barrett: A request came from the Community Unemployed Help Centre to the Government, and the Government, actually three departments, have supported this organization. The Department of Family Services and the Department of Education and Training each provided \$20,000, and the Department of Labour provided \$10,000 to the Community Unemployed Help Centre.

Mr. Schuler: Can the Minister tell this Committee, for instance, who monitors the accountability of that money?

Ms. Barrett: I cannot recall whether it was Family Services or Education took the lead in this, because one department takes the lead when there is more than one department that participates in something like this. That information would have to come from one of those departments, and we can endeavour to find out which department. I believe it is Family Services, so that question would best be asked in

the Family Services Estimates because they would be the Department that would be the major liaison with the Community Unemployed Help Centre.

Mr. Schuler: For instance, to the Minister, is there a final report that has to be tabled and, again, I do not think anybody is questioning the organization. I am sure they are contributing greatly to our community and our society, but because it is public money, there still has to be that accountability. Are you asking for a final report. Certainly, the Department of Labour must have an interest, having put some money into it. What kind of accountability will be coming back to the Department for any grants that are authorized through section 6(2)?

Ms. Barrett: In this particular situation, the Department of Family Services, as the lead department, will be monitoring the grants and will be making a report. We will be linking with that department on ensuring that the money is effectively and efficiently being used.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister see this as being an ongoing grant for this particular organization? Yearly funding?

Ms. Barrett: My recollection of the grant application was that approval was for one year. We will have to see what happens at the end of the year, whether the Community Unemployed Help Centre asks for another grant or if the analysis of the program justifies it, that kind of thing. The specifics of this grant were for one year.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister see there being more organizations getting support under this particular section of the Act. Does she see this as being a budgetary growth item in the years ahead?

Ms. Barrett: Historically, there have not been a large number of grants given out by the Department of Labour.

I know the former government would give out the odd grant as well. Not huge numbers of grants is what I mean by the word "odd." I do not foresee a large number of grants. We do not solicit grant applications, and, historically, there

have not been a large number of grants that have come out of the Department of Labour.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Emerson–Springfield—where did that come from? The Member for Springfield.

* (15:40)

Mr. Schuler: Seeing that the Chair of this Committee is not too far off. It is just about a hundred-and-some kilometres south of my constituency, but it is the eastern region.

I guess my question to the Minister is: Does she see there being, when she is reviewing the Act— is this something that she would like to see removed? Is it something she would like to see strengthened to give her perhaps more room within her department to fund organizations like the one that she is funding this time around? Is she seeing any kinds of changes happening in this particular area as far as the authority to grant funds.

Ms. Barrett: I have not begun my review of this piece of legislation, so I think it would be very preliminary—it would not be appropriate for me to make a comment at this time, because I have not looked at the legislation itself as how it fits into the rest of the Department, et cetera.

So I have not given it any thought at this point, but I will be looking at all of the elements of the legislation when I do review it.

Mr. Schuler: Then, just further to that, the Minister has actually taken under her authority, for instance, MGAC, which is a funding arm on one side, and one of the things that government does do is assign grants. So, again, just back to this particular section, certainly I appreciate that she has not come up with an exact direction she wants to go, but just on it, does she have a problem with the Department giving grants like this on the occasional basis? Would she see it as being something positive to increase? Just more of a thought process as to where she is going with this whole area.

She certainly has a lot of grant-giving agencies and a lot of boards and commissions under her authority, and, certainly, she must

have already decided where she is sort of heading with some of these. So just sort of what direction she is planning on going.

Ms. Barrett: Well, as I stated in my response to the question just preceding this, I have not given any thought to this legislation. I have a number of pieces of legislation that are in my department, and I am working my way through them. I am not prepared to comment on what the end result of my reviewing this piece of legislation might be on any of the elements.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us, has the grant already been given, or when is she planning on giving the grant?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Insofar as the line item, Grants, is concerned, the Minister has already indicated that the \$10,000 has been earmarked. Should another proponent come forward with a very good proposal or grant application, where would the Minister get the money from, seeing as her budget for grants is gone already. How would the Minister be able to fund any other applicant when that line item already is spoken for?

Ms. Barrett: This is a theoretical question, so, theoretically, a budget is a plan. As you will note, the estimate of expenditures is not terribly detailed. The figures have been rounded out. They are not line-by-line-by-line-by-line of the actual—even the Estimates is still a summary. What happens and what has happened with governments from time immemorial as far as I am concerned—for a very long period of time—that is the role of Treasury Board. If we have a line item in our budget that is \$10,000 and we want to spend actually \$20,000, the role is to go to Treasury Board and say to Treasury Board, make a rationalization, make a justification for the additional funding that would be required there. This is a process that has been undertaken by many governments.

I can tell you that I was just chatting with the former minister responsible for the Lotteries Corporation who, in talking with me about the process that was undertaken in dealing with the issue of the casino overexpenditures, he said, what we did is, we had a plan for X number of

millions of dollars. When it got more finalized, it was more than we had planned for originally, so we went to Treasury Board and asked for more money. And that is the process that happens. The recognition is that you can make a budget, you can make a plan, but as in everybody's household budget, there are sometimes situations that come up that require reassessment. That would be the process, should a situation like that occur.

Mr. Schuler: Dealing with the same act, page 7, section 9 deals with the annual report of the Department. It says: The Minister shall make and submit to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council an annual report of the business of the Department and the report shall be forthwith laid before the Legislative Assembly. The Legislature is then in session, and if it is not then in session within 15 days after the opening of the next succeeding session. Traditionally, when is the annual report tabled by the Department of Labour?

Ms. Barrett: The deadline for tabling the Annual Report of the Department of Labour is September 30 of each year. The 1998-99 Annual Report would have been tabled prior to the last election, because the letter of transmittal was signed by my predecessor, with no date, I might add.

Mr. Schuler: On page 8, section 11 deals with immunity concerning comments, and I will read the section: "Privilege in respect of conciliation proceedings. 11(1). Subject to subsection 2, nothing said or done by the minister, the Deputy Minister of Labour, a conciliation officer, a member of a conciliation board, registrar or an employee of the Department of Labour in the course of efforts made pursuant to The Labour Relations Act, to settle an industrial dispute is admissible in evidence in any action or proceedings before the board or a court relating to, or arising out, of the industrial dispute, and brought or taken under a statute of other law of the province, or otherwise within the jurisdiction of the Legislature." Could you explain this section of the Act to the Committee?

Ms. Barrett: My understanding of this is that it protects those individuals identified in that section from being compelled to give testimony

as to what happened during the process of settling an industrial or labour dispute. It is similar to or parallel to the client-attorney relationship. It protects the privacy and the privilege of the process that is undertaken in order to attempt to settle a labour dispute.

* (15:50)

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, does it also cover anything that the Minister or any of the other individuals listed in here of statements that might be made publicly?

Ms. Barrett: My understanding, and I am taking guidance from staff who are not lawyers, so with that caveat, it says that while you are in the process of negotiating or working through an industrial dispute, what you say in that context inside that process, you are not compelled. It is privileged. If a conciliation officer or mediator outside that process says something in public, then this section would not apply. I will give the Member an analogy. It is the same thing as in the Legislature, in the Chamber. A member could say to another member, for example: I am going to punch your lights out, Timmy. And because the statement is made in the Legislative Chamber there is no action that could be taken legally. Had that member theoretically chosen to make that statement to another member outside the Chamber, then that protection which applies to what is stated inside the Chamber would not apply.

Mr. Schuler: So the immunity that is granted by this particular act is only within the negotiation process. It does not cover the individuals outside the negotiation. So, if they were to walk out and stand in the hallway and say something and the media picked it up, they are fair game.

Ms. Barrett: Exactly. That is my understanding of the impact of this section.

Mr. Schuler: Just on that. Is the Minister comfortable with the scope of that particular section of the Act?

Ms. Barrett: I will answer as I have answered before. I have not looked at this piece of legislation in any depth or detail, so I am not prepared to make a definitive statement on any

specific area. I do believe, however, that it is critical that we have protection for people who are working within that dispute settlement process so that they can, in comfort, do the work that they are supposed to be doing.

I think that probably this section has worked well over the years. I have not heard of any situation where, to my knowledge, it has been invoked. But, you do need, in these very delicate matters, the comfort level that this section would provide.

Mr. Schuler: Has the Minister ever been required to make use of this privilege?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Has there ever been an employee of the Department listed in this particular section that has been required to make use of this privilege?

Ms. Barrett: To my knowledge and certainly to staff's knowledge, there has not been a case where this section has come into play directly because basically both sides in dispute, both labour and management in Manitoba, recognize the importance of the sanctity of this process. And so it has been honoured through the decades by not having to be invoked because people understand what it is there for. They understand that, while they are in the process, they are free to say what they want to and they have respected the knowledge that if they say something outside that process they are open then to consequences, whatever they might be.

Mr. Schuler: The same act on page 9, , headline is "Discrimination against employees who give evidence, et cetera, forbidden. 13(1) No employer shall discharge, or threaten to discharge, or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because the employee has given information to an officer of the department or because (a) the employee has testified, or is about to testify; or (b) the employer believes that the employee may testify; in any investigation or proceedings relative to the enforcement of any Act the administration of which is under the control of the minister."

My question to the Minister is: How often has section 13(1) been violated?

Ms. Barrett: The statistical information that the Member is asking for would more appropriately come under the discussion of the Labour Board, because if this clause is invoked, it would likely end up as an issue before the Labour Board. We will endeavour to talk with the Labour Board to get those statistics.

But perhaps, given that the Labour Board will be here at some point, when we get there, this would be better discussed when the Labour Board Chair is here and can give more detail. Before I end, I am wondering if the Member would agree to a five-minute break.

* (16:00)

Madam Chairperson: The Committee will take a five-minute break. *[interjection]* Oh, does the Committee agree? *[Agreed]*

The Committee recessed at 4:00 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:13 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Will the Committee please resume? The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Schuler: Previous to the break I had asked the Minister in regard to how often section 13(1) had been violated. She had indicated that was probably a question to be brought up when the Labour Board is present. Would the Minister be willing to forward this particular question to the Labour Board and they could have that information available to them?

Ms. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: On the same page, page 9 of the Act, it reads: "Penalty. 13(2) Every person who offends against subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable, on summary conviction, to a fine of not more than \$100 or imprisonment for more than 30 days and for a second or subsequent offence to a fine of not less than \$25 and not more than \$500 or to imprisonment for

not more than 90 days." How often are the penalties outlined in section 13(2) invoked?

Ms. Barrett: I would like to refer that question as well to the Labour Board and will ensure that when that Labour Board section comes before Estimates so that we can discuss that at that time as well.

Mr. Schuler: Would the Minister consider forwarding that question also to the Labour Board so that this would be something they would be prepared for?

Ms. Barrett: I thought I made that clear in my answer, but if I did not, yes of course, otherwise we would not be able to discuss it if the information was not ready.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister feel that the penalties are sufficient to deter violations?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated before in questions of this specific nature and dealing with this piece of legislation, and I will say again in anticipation of similar questions being asked of other pieces of legislation before the Department of Labour, in this particular instance I have not looked at this piece of legislation nor have I asked myself that question. When I do come to review this legislation, of course, the issue of penalties will be there.

I just want to explain to the Member that I am not yet prepared to answer those types of detailed questions on any other piece of legislation that is before the Department of Labour, because we are in the process of reviewing all of those pieces of legislation. So just as sort of a pre-emptive warning that that will be my answer for any questions he has of that nature on other pieces of legislation, because I have not had a chance to review in detail those pieces of legislation.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, I am not asking the Minister if she is reviewing or if she is not reviewing. I am not asking her a lot of the things that she is addressing. Basically, the question is, and it is more of a policy of her own personal philosophy, and that is where a lot of these questions come in. I would just like to ask the Minister: A fine of not more than \$100 for a first

offence, does she feel that is sufficient to deter a violation? I am not asking her if she is reviewing acts or whatever. It is just an open question.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, and I think it is incumbent upon me to make as informed an answer as possible. As I have mentioned to the Member on several occasions, in relation to this piece of legislation and other pieces of legislation in the Department of Labour, I have not had an opportunity to review the legislation. Therefore, I do not have the information that I am going to need to make an evaluation about any of these elements, so I am not prepared to state whether I think the penalties in this case are effective or not. I do not have the information about how many times it has been used, about what penalties have been assigned, if people who have been fined under this section have reoffended. I do not have the information that I need to make an analysis, and until I do, I am not prepared to make a statement at this time because it would be premature.

Mr. Schuler: I guess basically what we are saying is, in your opinion, is this something you find acceptable? I have to say to the Minister, reading sessions past, where one of her own colleagues indicated to this Committee that it was this member who was going to end up being the Labour Minister should their party win, surely the Minister must have gone through this process. Surely they must have sat here hour after hour and gone through the various acts and formed some kind of opinion whether or not that is acceptable or that is not acceptable. I do not think I am asking something so totally out of the blue that all of a sudden there is no answer forthcoming. It is basically asking the Minister's opinion. I am concerned that the Minister declares that she is going to be reviewing legislation within her department and then uses that to hide behind and not answer questions.

In her opinion, does she think a \$100 penalty is sufficient to deter a violation?

Ms. Barrett: I am hardly hiding behind anything. I am being, I believe, ministerial and doing what it is my job to do, which is to make an evaluation of pieces of legislation, of sections of legislation based on information, information that I do not have to this point. I have not looked

at this piece of legislation prior to today. I do not have any background, as I have said to the Member before, on the impact, if any, of this section on recidivism rates or any of those elements. Until I do, it would be wrong of me to make a presumptive statement.

I am not hiding behind anything, and I will tell the Member that, in my recollection, in Estimates, in this department and others, we have not gone through to the same degree of detail—I may be wrong, because I have not read all of the departments' Estimates over all of the nine, ten years that I have been an MLA—specific pieces of legislation, unless they are before the House, to this degree.

* (16:20)

So, if the Member wants to think that I am hiding, he is certainly entitled to that opinion, but I would suggest that it would be wrong of me to make a presumptuous statement without the information that I need at hand to make that determination. I will let the Member know, as a member of the Legislature, through the normal processes of legislation introduction and debate and discussion and public hearings, the end result of my consultations and deliberations. Until that point, I am not prepared to make a comment on something for which I do not have the correct information or the degree of information I need.

Mr. Schuler: Well, seeing as the Minister has not had an opportunity to go through that particular act, we have touched on some of the issues that I feel should be looked at, and I think we will just leave it where it is for now and move on back to where we were when we ended about five o'clock yesterday. It was dealing with the Executive Support.

Since one of the activities of Executive Support identified in this document is to provide overall policy direction, where else does policy direction come from, aside from the various advisory boards the Minister has yet to make use of?

Ms. Barrett: I have a great deal of contact with members of the staff, especially at the senior staff level, the Deputy Minister, the executive

directors of the various branches, et cetera. Often an issue will come to me from an outside source in the sense of, for example, if there is an injury or an accident in the workplace, I could very easily, and have on occasion, asked the Workplace Safety and Health Division for information on the background of that incident. I do not have to ask for that because I get that information as a matter of course on the situation, what had occurred and what is happening with the investigation, if any, that is needed to be undertaken.

That sort of specific information might lead me to think about an issue or a policy implication, and when that happens, I will go back to the staff and say: Here is the situation; what does this mean for x, y or z policy, or have we looked at, do we have—because I am still learning the Department—a policy in this area? Do we need to strengthen regulations? Do we need to look at some changes in the way things are operating? How are you addressing it?

Issues arise from a number of different venues. I get questions coming to me from constituents. I get questions coming to me from members of the public, from my caucus and cabinet colleagues, from a number of sources, and I will then utilize the resources of the Department to give me sometimes specific information, sometimes just a general discussion of, okay, this is the situation; what is your recommendation? It is from a variety of sources that I receive advice.

Mr. Schuler: Back to the Other Expenditures under Grants, the Minister had already identified that the Community Help Centre was the one that had applied for and is receiving the \$10,000 grant. Would the Minister be willing to table that application to this Committee?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, as I referenced earlier, I believe the Department of Family Services is the lead department in this area, and that question would be more appropriately directed to that department.

Mr. Schuler: So is the Minister saying that she will not table that grant application? Surely, her department must have a copy of it, seeing as her department is the one that has contributed

\$10,000 to the application. Will she table the grant application?

Ms. Barrett: I again respond to the Member's question by saying he should ask the lead department who has responsibility for the monitoring and working with the Community Unemployed Help Centre for that information.

Mr. Schuler: Under Transportation, that particular line item, \$30,900, could the minister explain what that \$30,900 is used for?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the \$30,900 is for the ministerial and deputy ministerial vehicles support as well as travel expenses when the Minister and/or the Deputy Minister go out of province or are travelling within province on departmental business.

Mr. Schuler: Last year the Estimates for '99-2000 was the same amount, \$30,900. Could the minister tell us what was actually spent last year?

Ms. Barrett: The actual expenditure was \$28,400-\$28,381, to be exact.

Mr. Schuler: That \$28,381, could the minister tell this Committee: Does her department actually buy the vehicle or is that supplied to the Department by another agency or department?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the vehicles are leased through an agreement with the Fleet Vehicles division, which is a special operating agency that was established by the former government.

Mr. Schuler: Who are the vehicles leased from?

*(16:30)

Ms. Barrett: Fleet Vehicles Agency. It is a special operating agency of the Government established by the former government.

Mr. Schuler: Do they just assign a vehicle or how does the Minister or Deputy Minister get a particular vehicle? Do they go to a dealership and say: I would like to have an Intrepid, white, grey interior. What I am asking is how do you get to the point of getting the particular vehicle that you have?

Ms. Barrett: I wish it were. Or actually, no, as a prudent minister of the Crown, I do not wish it were wide open. I am sure many of us would have wishes that would far exceed an appropriate level of vehicle expenditure.

Fleet Vehicles is under the responsibility of the Minister of Highways and Government Services. That Estimates has concluded, so my answer here is again with a proviso that it is not my department, and I may be general in my response. My understanding is that there is a fleet of vehicles. There is also, I believe, a departmental regulation that says ministers' cars can be worth not more than X amount of money and deputy ministers' cars, etc. They are a quite modest range of acceptable expenditures. The Fleet Vehicles Agency has a number of cars that are available for use.

I think what happened when the Government changed is that most of the new ministers at the very beginning had the cars that were the cars from their predecessors. I certainly did, and I drove that car for a few weeks and decided that it was way too big. It just was way too big for me, so I asked for another car and another car was provided to me through the Fleet Vehicles Agency.

Mr. Schuler: How long is the lease for?

Ms. Barrett: I believe that they are monthly lease payments to the Fleet Vehicles, because there is an option for ministers, for example, to have a car leased to you or an amount—I do not know how much the amount is—an allowance in lieu of a car. I chose the car, so I do not know what the allowance amount is. It is a short-term lease to reflect the fact that there is not necessarily long-term job security in this position, and situations change.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, is the insurance covered under this, as well, for the vehicle?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the Special Operating Agency, the Fleet Vehicles, handles all of those details, and that is all arranged through the operations of the SOA. You can get access to the Fleet Vehicles Agency annual report. I would suggest you contact the Minister of Government Services and Highways, and he can provide you

with that annual report where I believe much of the answers to these questions can be found.

Mr. Schuler: So you make a monthly payment on the vehicle, and that covers the lease and the insurance?

Ms. Barrett: The Department makes, under the Transportation item, a monthly payment to the Fleet Vehicles Agency, and that would cover whatever it covers in the contract. Again, because that is handled through Fleet Vehicles, it would probably be better to ask those questions of the Minister responsible and/or get the annual report of the Fleet Vehicles Agency. They would have in there people you could contact for the details.

Mr. Schuler: Certainly, that is advice that I could take. I guess the question I have is: Of the \$30,900, how is that appropriated? For instance, there is a lease payment. You are saying that you pay no insurance for the vehicle, so that must be included in the lease payment, then. That would be the assumption because the vehicle has to be insured, I guess.

Ms. Barrett: Again, I do not have the details here. I would suggest contacting Fleet Vehicles, but the automobile for the Minister and the Deputy Minister, all of those details are handled through Fleet Vehicles. The car is owned by Fleet Vehicles. It has a sticker on the window and it is a fleet vehicle. It is owned by the special operating agency and it is leased to the Minister and the Deputy Minister, so those arrangements are between the Department and Fleet Vehicles.

Mr. Schuler: Madame Chair, could the Minister tell us what is the lease payment on the two vehicles?

Ms. Barrett: I do not have that information available, but if the Member really wishes it, I can provide it.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, I would appreciate if the Minister, the next time we meet, if we could just have that information. Supplementary to that, I suspect that the gas is also covered on the vehicles?

Ms. Barrett: The gas for ministerial business is covered; however, I think that from home to the Legislature is taken off, and I am charged for that, and any time that I might use the vehicle for personal business, I report those kilometres to Fleet Vehicles. I believe that is a taxable expense that I undertake.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister perhaps mean a taxable income? Just for the information of the Committee, and there are a few here who have not sat through one of these sessions, do you have a gas charge card? Is that how you—or do you submit bills?

Ms. Barrett: For my personal kilometres there is a monthly statement that comes through, and I put in the kilometres on that statement that have been for my personal use. That is how I do it.

* (16:40)

Mr. Schuler: I do not think the Minister heard my question. What I was asking is, for instance, for the gas, do you have a government gas card that you use, and then this statement goes to the Department, or do you pay for it yourself and you hand in the bills for it?

Ms. Barrett: Well, I have a government card that would then be used. My understanding, and I would have to get the specifics from the Department, is that I get charged for the kilometres that I use for personal business, but I do have a government card to use for filling with gas, et cetera.

Mr. Schuler: I will leave the cars alone after this one. General maintenance, who pays for general maintenance, you need a new muffler, somebody keys your car, like general maintenance, who would cover that? Oil changes?

Ms. Barrett: That is covered under the lease agreement.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister explain what the Supplies and Services line provides?

Ms. Barrett: Yes. The Supplies part of that is basically the paper clip line. Paper office supplies, et cetera. The Services would be, for

example, if we are required to have a legal opinion on something, we would go to the Department of Justice, and the Government has a charge-back arrangements so that we would be charged a fee for getting legal services from the Department of Justice. That is an example of the Services part of that.

Mr. Schuler: I ask the Minister simply because I would not know how this is done. On that Supplies and Services, is there anywhere where one can get an actual breakdown of how the money was spent? Literally, a line-by-line item. Is that public information? For instance, in the year 1999-2000, is there somewhere that the public could actually see an actual expenditure where Revy, Home Depot, whatever was accessed?

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Is the Member asking for a detailed itemization of how much the Department spent on paper, how much the Department spent on Xerox, how much the Department spent on paper clips, on pens? Is the Member really asking for that kind of a detailed itemization for the department's expenditure for this \$8,200 item?

Mr. Schuler: No. What I am asking for, as you go line by line, there must be a detailed budget that breaks it out on a more finite basis. I am not asking that the Minister for it. I am asking that when the expenditures are finally released, is that information available?

Ms. Barrett: We can provide, if the Member is looking for, what the categories are that come under this, then we could quite easily provide that. I think if the Member is asking for how much did we, literally how much did we spend on paper clips and how much did we spend on stationery, et cetera, that would be quite an extensive list. But we could provide a listing of the kinds of expenditures such as legal services, stationery, photocopy, rental, this kind of thing, if that would be adequate to the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, that is what I am looking for, again, because I have done budgets for numerous years within the budget of the River

East School Division. Our budget was 70 and went up to \$78 million, and it was quite exhaustive. We actually got line by line where the money was spent and, just being a small business person, I find that all very interesting, how the expenditures are done, how it is budgeted for, that kind of thing. It is done by category. I am not asking for every time somebody went out to Office Depot and brought back a receipt, that kind of thing. How do you break down 8,000? Then you have got the next line, which is Other Operating. How do you categorize that? How much goes for legal? How much of that goes for office supplies? How much of that goes for leasing equipment? Do you buy computers through this particular line, that kind of stuff? How are funds allocated?

Ms. Barrett: What you are suggesting is, under Supplies and Services and Other Operating, a category listing.

Mr. Schuler: Just a categorical listing. I do not need to have a finite listing.

Ms. Barrett: We can provide that information.

Mr. Schuler: On the Supplies and Services, the Minister mentioned legal opinions. Would that be for drafting legislation?

Ms. Barrett: My understanding is that when I said such as legal services, that was an example of a service under this particular Supplies and Services. There is not anything budgeted for legal services, because it has virtually never been required before. Under Workplace Safety and Health, when there is a potential for charging someone for an infraction, that is when, for example, legal services might be more asked for under Workplace Safety and Health. As you will note, under each division there are the same items, more or less the same items. Supplies and Services, like every division, will have paperclips, but the services will vary division to division, the categories of services.

Mr. Schuler: Other Operating costs, can the Minister explain what that line item is used for?

Ms. Barrett: I offered an earlier answer to provide the categories there at the same time that we provided the categories for Supplies and

Services, if that would be acceptable to the Member.

Mr. Schuler: That is fine. Just a broad answer. Is it for running the office? Is it for office equipment?

Ms. Barrett: Items like hotels and meals for the Minister and Deputy Minister that are not covered under transportation and publications that the Minister's office might wish to subscribe to.

Mr. Schuler: For instance, where would the Department's Web site come under in the expenditures? Would that come under Other Operating costs?

Ms. Barrett: Each division would have that under Other Expenditures as each division, I understand, has their own. They are all combined, but the expense is shared by each division.

* (16:50)

Mr. Schuler: Yet if you do go to the Department, it is www.gov.mb.ca/labour/. There is actually a home page for the Department. Where would the cost for that come from?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, my understanding is that this last year the very small amount of money that it cost came from the labour management appropriation, Labour Management Services, but it could be housed in any of the divisions. It is quite a small amount of money, I understand, and so it is not historically tied to any one particular part of the Department.

Mr. Schuler: Then, just on that particular issue, it was with great interest that I read the Government's news release yesterday with respect to the launching of a newly designed government Web site, and I quote: Improved government Web site provides faster, easier access. The Manitoba Government has revamped its Web site to provide faster and easier access to information about provincial programs, services, and so on and so forth.

We checked the Web site today and the newly updated Department of Labour site, and there were a couple of things that did surprise us.

Firstly, there is no minister's message. I do not know if the Minister was aware of that. The site says it will be forthcoming over the next three weeks, but the date on the page is October 1999. Does the Minister think that 30-some-odd weeks is a sufficient amount of time to come up with a ministerial message?

Ms. Barrett: I am delaying my response because I understand that a Web site is a very important access for people to have. I would just like to say to the Member that the last eight months have been enormously busy for me as minister, for the staff acquainting a new minister with the Department. The issues that we have dealt with, the legislative agenda, et cetera, and the fact that the Department of Labour now includes a brand new division that I would assume, and I do not have the specifics, so this is an assumption on my part, that the Web site maintenance has fallen further down the list of priorities than some of the other items that the Department has dealt with.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister. Actually the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), between her trips to Ottawa, and the minister responsible for gambling, when he finds spare time between his doubling of gambling in the province, have found time to compose a ministerial message. Does the Minister not think it is time she had a ministerial message on her department site?

Ms. Barrett: I would just like to ask a rhetorical kind—well, not a rhetorical response but a question of the Member who in between his comments in the Legislature about Albania, has he had time in the last month to respond to Mr. Lloyd Schreyer's letter of a month ago outlining a very serious allegation of invasion of privacy of a very serious nature? I would suggest to the Member that every minister in this government works very hard. If the Member would care to listen to the response—well, I will just stop my response until the Member is prepared to listen to it.

Now that I have the Member's undivided attention again, I will continue with my response. I have explained to the Member what I believe has happened in the lack of a ministerial message. I would like to share with the Member

that the Minister of Labour has initiated several public announcements on very important issues that have probably had more broad dissemination throughout the community than the ministerial message on the Web site. I explained that due to the nature of the position that I am in and the issues that I have faced and the Department has faced, that this ministerial message on the home Web page has not been put in place. It will be very shortly.

But I do suggest that the Member might want to rethink carefully his words when he asks questions, and the answer is that I do not know what the Minister responsible for Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux)—there is no minister of gambling—have also had very heavy duties, and we are all dealing with issues as they arise in our departments. As I have said to the Member, there will be a ministerial message on the Web page in very short order.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell this Committee: Amongst her other duties, is she also the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General?

Ms. Barrett: Just pausing to see what kind of response I should give, and I think I will give the very brief one. No.

Mr. Schuler: Well, according to her Web site, the Minister is identified as such. Page 1 of 1, it says Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Underneath it says: Our department has a new minister effective October 5. Please click here to view the Minister's biography. A new minister's message will be available here in the weeks to come.

While this may be an innocent mistake, do you not think something as confusing and misleading as this should have been caught months ago and fixed, or is the site updated regularly noticed by someone? I would just, on the record, that particular page has October 1999 written on it. I suspect it has not been updated lately.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, there are several Web sites that the Member could be referring to, but we will check into the situation and make sure that information is as accurate as is possible.

Mr. Schuler: Could I ask the Minister then: How much feedback has she received from the Web site?

* (17:00)

Ms. Barrett: The Web site, as I believe I stated earlier, is divided. Each division has its own portion of the Web site. Depending on the division, there are a number of hits each month on each of the Web sites. Any enquiries that come through are dealt with as quickly as is possible, but it varies from division to division.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister find the feedback received useful?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: The Department of Labour's Web sites, the vast majority of them are used to provide information on services that the Department of Labour provides on regulations, on questions that are asked. A lot of people who call in to the Web site and also who call in to the Department—and in excess of 30 000 hits are on the various Web sites in a month. The vast majority of those would be, just request that the hit happens, but there is not any interaction so that they get the information they need and then leave the Web site.

There are occasions where a question is asked, and virtually always it is of an information nature, or asking for more information on a particular issue, and those are followed up very quickly, my understanding is, by each individual division. I do not believe there are many hits that are of a suggestion nature, that may be the case, but the vast majority of the activity on the Web site is just accessing the information there. A much smaller proportion actually asks for more detailed questions, and that is the activity of the Web site.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister not feel that perhaps providing a way to reach someone in the Department on the home page would be an even more effective way to solicit feedback?

Ms. Barrett: On the Web sites, the e-mail addresses are there. Much of the interaction that takes place as a result of accessing the Web site

occurs through follow-up e-mail to the various divisions. Those would be more likely to have suggestions or concerns raised. I know that I have seen e-mail come to my attention as minister that relates to a specific issue, and I have used those e-mails as I would treat any telephone call or letter or fax and then send the information or the request or the suggestion or the concern into the appropriate part of the Department. So the Web site is being used in that regard.

Mr. Schuler: Although it is difficult to interact with the Department through the home page, are there any plans in the future to expand the services provided on the site, like surveys on proposed legislation, a way to lodge complaints, and things of this nature?

Ms. Barrett: In the division of Workplace Safety and Health, there is a form that can be filled out for lodging complaints, so that part of that is there. I am not sure about the Employment Standards division. When the Employment Standards Division comes up, the Member may wish to ask that question.

We have a small working group in the Department that is looking at the Web site and looking at how to utilize it more effectively, and I would suggest that this goes back to the empowerment of employees that we talked about yesterday. So I am sure that this working group is looking at ways to more effectively utilize the Web site.

Mr. Schuler: Just to the Minister, Madam Chair, that on the home page there is no "contact us," there is no e-mail unless you go into another section, "Message from the Minister of Labour," which there is not, "Message from the Deputy Minister of Labour." In fact, I do not even see any place there where you can contact him. Normally there would be something where you click on "contact us" and e-mail sets up and you can just contact them. So, just for the record, Madam Minister, there actually is not any way to contact off the home page.

My question to the Minister is: Does she feel that the Web site's French component is adequate?

Ms. Barrett: Again I would ask that the Member ask this question when the appropriate divisions are before us. But Workplace Safety and Health and Employment Standards, my information is both in English and French.

Mr. Schuler: One of the other duties I hold is the PC Party deputy critic for French Language Services. I would like to point out to the Minister that on the home page, if you click on the français the page that comes up on the French section is blank. Do you feel that the complete lack of French on the home page for your department is acceptable? It says "under construction."

Ms. Barrett: Oh, it says "under construction." Well, then, perhaps we should wait for the construction to be completed. I know about the "bilingue" characteristics of at least two of the divisions' Web sites. I have asked the Member to bring these questions back to other divisions when they are at the table, and as the Member knows, I have made a commitment to update and construct, as quickly as possible, the home page and he can rest assured that the home page, he will be very pleased with its characteristics.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to ask the Minister: Has she ever personally visited her own Web site?

Ms. Barrett: I will announce, as I have to very many people over the years, that I am not technologically advanced. I call myself a Luddite. I have access to my e-mail, which I feel like I have made huge strides, and so to be perfectly honest I have not accessed and I would not know how to access the Web page. But those people in the Department whose responsibilities it is to ensure that the Web pages of the divisions are up to date and that information is taken off and followed through and kept current are able to do that.

* (17:10)

Mr. Schuler: Minister, the last time that the Department of Labour's home page was modified, and it states so right on the front, is April 28, 1999. Should that not have been enough time to have gotten the French home page up and running?

Ms. Barrett: As I have stated in earlier responses to the Member, I have undertaken to ensure that the home page is constructed and includes a minister's message and is in both official languages, and I would ask the Member's co-operation in awaiting the quick completion of the home page.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister's own government put out the press release June 6, 2000, and I have read it to the Minister, that heralds the Manitoba government has revamped its Web site. Does the Minister consider the lack of French to be an improvement over the old Web site?

Ms. Barrett: I have explained to the Member that the home page will be updated. It will be completely bilingual. It will have a minister's message on it, and that, as far as I know, to this date, the parts of the Web site that are divisionally run, which now includes, I understand, the research division Web site, are bilingual as well. The information I have on those divisions and for the other divisions— if the Member would ask that question when those individuals are at the table, I am sure we will get that information at that time.

Mr. Schuler: Again, back to the Minister, the home page is actually where the Minister's office where in fact the Deputy Minister has an opportunity to herald the good work of the Department and that is certainly where the Minister's letter will come. I suspect it will not come within the 30 weeks, maybe in 31 weeks, after having been appointed.

The Minister's own government heralds this revamping of the Web site. And again, if this is a new Web site, is the lack of French, is that considered an improvement over the old, and is this the position of her NDP government?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I have stated to the Member that the home page issue will be addressed and certainly will include both English and French. We are committed to providing French services and we will do so on the home page as well as every other part of the department's Web site.

Mr. Schuler: When can a translation be expected?

Ms. Barrett: I would assume at the same time that the Minister's message is there that it will be there in both official languages and will expedite that process.

Mr. Schuler: In addition to the mission statement, guiding principles, and vision discussed in the Web site, there is a statement of purpose found on the home page. How was it formulated?

Ms. Barrett: I will have to take that question as notice.

Mr. Schuler: I happen to have a copy of it here. I will read it for the Minister, and perhaps she could then respond: Statement of purpose. Our purpose is to serve Manitobans through: the promotion of safety, health, and fair and equitable treatment in the workplace, the enhancement of public safety, the fostering of a stable labour relations climate, the support of workplace training and adjustment. Then it says we are committed to serving the Manitoba public efficiently, courteously and effectively. Next, consulting equally with labour, management and other client groups; providing information and support to our clients to enable them to act responsibly in respect to fairness, safety, health and equity.

Then it says, to achieve our purpose and goals, we will subscribe to the principles of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funds, recognize that staff are our most important resource and the key to achieving our purpose, develop a flexible organization responsive to changing needs and circumstances, promote consistently the principle that safe working places, fair employment practices, and harmonious labour relations are essential to the economic and social well being of Manitobans.

My question to the Minister is: How was this one formulated?

Ms. Barrett: This is a statement that would have been formulated by the former minister. When the home page is complete, the statement of the same order will be part of that. My understanding is that that statement would have been formulated—and I suppose the former

minister should really have been asked—but would have been formulated in much the same way as the vision mission and guiding principles were formulated for the Estimates process. Many of the same concepts are present in both documents.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, with due respect, no, the former minister should not be asked. Through you, Madam Chair, this minister has been minister for 30 months—pardon me, 30 weeks.

An Honourable Member: It does not seem like that long.

Mr. Schuler: Sitting at this table, it feels like 30 months. The Minister should actually be responsible and should know what is going on on the Web page.

As far as these statements of purpose as I have read them, is the Minister planning any changes to them? She has indicated that she is doing a lot of reviews. Is she planning with that review to change any of these statements of purpose that she has on her Web site?

Ms. Barrett: The Statement of Purpose was developed by the former government. It was not developed by myself. I have explained to the Member that there has been a lack of, perhaps as expeditious as possible, updating of the home page, and that this will be corrected very shortly. I will have a look at the statement of principles that the Member has read out and will certainly formulate a statement of principles that I feel comfortable with as the current minister. That will be found when the new home page is established.

I am not trying to say that there should not be a home page that has a ministerial statement at all. I am not saying that at all, and there will be. But for the purposes of what the Department of Labour is all about, the Web sites that deal with the specific divisions that give answers to questions that are asked by people who are in the workplace and people who have issues with fairness and equity in the workplace and Employment Standards and Workplace Safety and Health, those sites are updated. They are accessed very frequently, and responses are made very quickly to questions that are raised

out of those home pages and through those e-mails.

Mr. Schuler: Well, the Minister talks about creating a new home page. Yet, on June 6, 2000, it was her government that put out a press release: "The Manitoba Government has revamped its Web site." I would then ask the Minister: Is she not comfortable with her new Web site, the new Web site that was announced by the Manitoba Government? Is she not comfortable with these statements of purpose?

* (17:20)

Ms. Barrett: Two separate questions there: One is the Government as a whole has a home page. I understand each department has a home page and a Web site. I have explained exhaustively to the Member my plans for very quickly updating the home page to include, in both official languages, statement of principles, ministerial message, and links to other parts of the Web site. I will make sure that happens very quickly. That is not, in my understanding, the same thing as the Government home page Web site.

On the second part of that question, I am not prepared to say what the principles are going to be. The principles that were read out by the Member were principles that were devised by the former government. Of course, I am going to put in principles that reflect the current government's vision, guiding principles and objectives. Very quickly, that will happen.

Mr. Schuler: Now the Minister is confusing this Committee. First, she says that it is a small working group within the Department that does the Web site, and now she says that it is the former government that tried to put a particular bent on the Web site. Is it the small working group within the Department that does the Web site, or is this a political statement by a minister?

Ms. Barrett: The statement of principles that the Member read out into the record just now were statements of principles that were very legitimately established by the former government. I have not seen the statement of principles. I have only heard them read to me. I will be developing a statement of principles that reflects the vision, the mission and the guiding

principles as are clear in the Department of Labour Estimates.

Some of the elements that the Member read into the record I am sure will be maintained. I will take a look at it and focus it the way our vision is as a government. That is a legitimate thing that the former government did and that I will be doing.

The small working group is a working group that I believe does not actually necessarily update the Web site but is looking at what it should be saying generally in its architecture. The specifics would come from each division, because they have the specific information on particular issues dealing with Workplace Safety and Health, Employment Standards, research, pensions, et cetera.

Mr. Schuler: With all due respect to the Minister, Madam Chair, she has had 30 weeks to make sure that this reflects her particular *Welt anschau*, and, frankly, these are not much different than what is in her budget documents. She seems to insinuate that somehow this is a representation of a philosophy of the previous government; on the other hand, she says that it is a small working group within the Department.

I am asking her: Which one does she feel that it is? Is this a representation of the previous government, or was this a departmental explanation of what the Department does?

Ms. Barrett: What I am saying to the Member is that the Statement of Purpose that the Member read into the record, which I have not seen yet, would have been a distillation of work done by the various divisions, brought up through the staff, looked at by the Deputy Minister, looked at by the Minister, but the final approval for the vision, the mission, the guiding principles as in the Estimates book, as well as the Statement of Purpose that was found on the Web page, the final approval would be the Minister's.

So, there is a ministerial accountability here that is required. There is input from the Department, absolutely, by staff. It goes up through the Department, through the various divisions and then through the Deputy Minister to the Minister. The Minister has final approval

of the language and the concepts. So, what I am saying is that I will be putting in place a statement of purpose that will reflect consultations with the Department and will reflect the vision, the mission and the guiding principles that are in the Estimates process.

It will be my statement of purpose, not the former government's statement of purpose. There may be some overlap, but it will be mine. What is on that Web page is the former government's statement of purpose which is what should have been there then, and what we will put in place very shortly will be our statement of purpose.

Mr. Schuler: So, for the record, this Minister has never seen it and did not know about it until I brought it to her attention, yet somehow she knows that the previous minister saw it and approved it and thus it would have a bent to it. I would bring to the Minister's attention that if we would not have brought this forward, the Minister would not have known about it. It would have stayed as it is. I do not understand. I would say to the Minister: The promotion of safety, health, and fair and equitable treatment in the workplace, is that something that she has a problem with?

Ms. Barrett: It ultimately will be the responsibility of the Minister to say, yes, this encompasses what I think the statement of purpose of the Department of Labour is. I will make that determination after working with staff on it and will take direction from staff. The Member is accurate, I have said that I have not accessed the Web page. That is true. I have stated that that is not my bent, I am learning, but I have not done that yet, and I will ensure that the home page—and we are talking about the home page here, I understand, not the blood and guts of the sinew and muscle of the Web site which is updated regularly and is a very accurate reflection of the divisions.

I have said to the Member that I will undertake to ensure that there is a home page. I believe there should be. I accept the Member's statement that it was an oversight, for sure, and that I will rectify that. I will include a statement of purpose, but I have not seen the Statement of Purpose that is there, and it is incumbent upon

me as Minister to ensure that that statement clearly reflects what the Department of Labour is about. I do not say that it has an ideological bent to it. I do not say that at all. It might very well be that I could virtually replicate that statement of purpose but it is incumbent upon me to make sure that it encompasses everything that the Department currently is looking at and currently is about.

I am not making this a political process at all. I am just saying I have not seen it. I will have to see it. I will make some judgments and determinations to see. Everything a new government does, they have to look at it, and cannot just assume either that what the former government did was by definition wrong, or that what the former government did was by definition right. It is incumbent upon each department, each Minister to look at it and say: this is our vision. Does this reflect it? Has the Department changed?

The Department of Labour actually is a different department than it was eight months ago because of the inclusion of the division of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. That is going to have to be reflected in a statement of purpose. We may want to put some more emphasis on some elements. Perfectly legitimate.

I do not understand why the Member is trying to make this a political situation because I am certainly not. I have agreed to the fact that we need to update, we need to put together a home page. There is no question about that, and those elements will be there as completely and as quickly and in both official languages that will include a statement of purpose and a ministerial letter, et cetera, and how to get access to the other parts of the Web page.

*(17:30)

Mr. Schuler: The Deputy Minister of Labour has a message and in it, it says, amongst other things, it is our intent to have this Web site provide relevant information to our clients, and I guess that does surprise me, Minister, and I would like to go on this a little further. Obviously on October '99, the message from the Minister was changed and when we clicked on to the Minister's message actually what did come

up on top was Minister of Justice and Attorney General, clearly something that should be changed.

So we had the time to notify that the Minister had been changed October 5, '99; clearly, that change had been made. That took place October '99. Yet on the first page you get when you click into the Department of Labour, nothing of the Minister's extra duties has ever been changed. That would be on the Web page—*[interjection]* on the home page; on the Web site but it is the home page of the Web site. So, no recognition of the Minister's new duties, basically not following what the Deputy Minister said in his letter: It is our intent to have this Web site provide relevant information to our clients.

Can the Minister assure this Committee that will now be brought through. A Web site, again it is sort of picking and choosing, and Minister, your department can walk you through it and there is always dates, date last modified. The home page, last modified April 28, 1999. On the Minister's own page, which I have pointed out to her was modified October, 1999, yet the Deputy Minister of Labour, his message, his page was last modified 98/12/09.

I would suggest to the Minister that perhaps a little bit more effort should be put into this. This is a new way of communicating with the public. It is a new way of getting her message out, and I would suggest to the Minister that her department has not really kept the Web site or the relevant information up to date. I was wondering if she will commit to this Committee that this Web site will provide relevant information to the public.

Ms. Barrett: To reiterate again, I guess that is a double something, yes. I have made commitments to the Member that the home page and the Minister's page will be updated. They will be made reflective of the current situation as quickly as that can be done.

I would like to suggest that it is not the staff's responsibility. This was something that should have been done by the Minister, because I could not possibly begin to do it. I will take responsibility for not having ensured that the

Minister's page was updated. But I will take exception to the general comment that was made that information is not updated. As I have stated on several occasions in this line of questioning, the home page and the Minister's page are not acceptable. That is absolutely correct. It will be changed as soon as possible.

The information that people really need from the Department of Labour on health and safety, on pensions, on research, on employment standards are updated on a regular basis. They have over 30 000 hits a month on them. Those parts are functional. I will ensure that the parts that have—my area, I have not done as well as should be done. But I would like to point out finally that the Deputy Minister's letter, which, again if the former government takes the same responsibility that I do, was not updated for nine months, before the last election was called. I will say that that is probably a little gratuitous hit that I probably should not say, because it was within a year of the government change.

But I will ensure that the issues that have been raised by the Member will be addressed. I do want to keep on the record the fact that the "meat and potatoes," the "guts" of this department's information is up to date, is updated regularly, and is providing the service to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: In the letter from the Deputy Minister, he goes on to say: "You can help us keep the information relevant and up to date by providing us feedback and advice on what you see, or more importantly what you don't see."

Minister, it is too bad that the Deputy Minister is not here right now. That is certainly one of the things that we are doing as the Opposition.

But, again, I would like to point out to the Minister that nowhere on the Deputy Minister's page can you click on to correspond with the Deputy Minister of Labour. As I have pointed out on your non-page that reads Minister of Justice and Attorney General, neither is there anywhere you can click on, for those who do not know, you usually have: talk to me here, or write me here, or speak to the Minister, or write to the

Minister, or whatever. Normally, that would be right on the page where the information is.

The nattering on the end of the table, talking about all kinds of money this costs—no, it actually does not. This is not an expensive thing to set up, but, again, certainly as a government, you want to be able to be accessible, and somewhere here, should be that you can click on. Anybody coming into this might have stopped right there and said: Well, you know the French section is totally under construction; there is nothing. The Minister's page, nothing, and then the Deputy Minister says: Keep us informed. We want to have relevant and up-to-date information. Provide us with feedback and advice—and that is it. There is no place here where you can respond back to the Deputy Minister and say: Excuse me, after 30 weeks, there is nothing here from the Minister. On the home page, all that it says is: English, which you can click on to get the English, and the French is under construction.

I would say to the Minister that again it has got to be very interactive. I for myself am in the process of developing my own Web site. In fact, the Minister's own government now is bringing in a bill dealing with all of this. One has to be very careful when putting out this kind of stuff, Minister. You know, the Deputy Minister says all kinds of stuff in his message and does not even have an area where you can click on to say, excuse me, Deputy Minister, but there seem to be some glaring omissions on your home page and all the way through.

Ms. Barrett: I would just like to reflect that I must have said at least five times for the Member that I accept that the Minister's home page, the overarching page is not complete, it is not adequate, it will be made adequate as soon as possible. I have said that at least five times. I have also included in that statement the fact that it will be interactive, that there will be access, as the Member has suggested.

So I do not know how many more times I have to say that this will be made so. Every issue that he has raised will be addressed as quickly as is possible. If he wants to ask me it again, I will answer the same thing again.

Mr. Schuler: It is just exactly what I am doing, Minister, just pointing out to you these things—

Ms. Barrett: Time and time again. You are wasting your own efforts.

Mr. Schuler: —that they can be rectified.

Ms. Barrett: And I am going to do it.

* (17:40)

Mr. Schuler: I would point the Minister to a section in the Web site on divisions and branches within the Department of Labour. It is intriguing that last modified is February 21, 2000. This is pretty current. Unfortunately, there is information on the site that is glaringly absent.

I would like to just bring the Minister back to the Statement of Purpose. I would like to ask the Minister if for instance the statement, the promotion of safety, health and fair and equitable treatment in the workplace, does she have a philosophical problem with that statement?

Ms. Barrett: The Statement of Purpose, as I have said to the Member before, needs to be looked at in its entirety. I have not seen the Statement of Purpose. I have told the Member that I will be putting forth a statement of purpose. That Statement of Purpose was a statement of purpose that was crafted prior to the last election. I have taken the Member's legitimate concern that we need to update it, and it will be updated. I am not going to comment on a statement of purpose that was put on the Web site under a former administration. There will be a statement of purpose that will be made available very shortly.

I think the Member can look at the vision and the mission and the guiding principles, which we did an exhaustive analysis of yesterday, on page 7 of the Estimates book for some indication as to what the Statement of Purpose will look like, but I am going to defer answering that to saying, and any other subsequent questions in this topic, that the answer will be found in the Statement of Purpose when it appears on the Web site.

Mr. Schuler: It is out of concern that I ask these questions of the Minister, because I still do not feel that this Committee is really that confident that the Minister actually believes some of these things. So I would like to ask her, and Minister, you should listen to some of your colleagues. They are saying that they also have a lack of confidence. For instance, our purpose is to serve Manitobans through the enhancement of public safety. Is that something the Minister would agree with or disagree with?

Ms. Barrett: I have stated to the Member and I will state again, the Statement of Purpose that he is referring to is a statement of purpose that is from the former government. I will be issuing a statement of purpose. Until that time I think it is inappropriate to talk about a statement of purpose that has to be looked at in its entirety. I will continue to answer that question. If the Member wants to look at, there is the vision, the mission and the guiding principles in the Estimates book. At this point those are visions, missions and guiding principles that we have looked at as a government and reflect our views. There was an opening statement, thank you, the Member of Fort Garry, I will provide the Member through the Web site. I will actually give it to him in hard copy with a statement of purpose when it is prepared.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to point out to this Committee and through you to the Minister, for 30 weeks she has been the Minister. October '99, the previous minister was removed from the Web site. Again I find that this committee is having difficulty with the Minister's statements. For instance, our purpose is to serve Manitobans through the fostering of a stable labour relation's climate. Minister, for the last 30 weeks this has been on the Web site, this has been public, are you not going to stand up and say, yes, this is what I believe in?

Ms. Barrett: I am giving the Member the answer I have given the Member on at least five earlier occasions. He can reference the Hansard when it comes out.

Mr. Schuler: For 30 weeks, until this Committee, this has been what the public has seen when they clicked on the Department of Labour, they have seen that the Deputy Minister

says, and I quote: "It is our intent to have this Web site provide relevant information to our clients."

Why will the Minister not then stand up and say: Our purpose is to serve Manitobans through the support of workplace training and adjustment? That for the last 30 weeks has been on her Web site. That has been what the public has accessed. Now all of a sudden she is distancing herself from it.

Why will she not stand and say, yes, that is what this department stands for, because until this point in time, until this critic brought it to the Minister's attention, this is exactly what the people of this province and in fact the whole world were seeing insofar as what the Department of Labour stands for.

Ms. Barrett: The Statement of Purpose of this new government will be available very shortly on the Web site.

Mr. Schuler: For 30 weeks the Minister has been in her portfolio. As people accessed the Labour Department's site, it said: We are committed to serving the Manitoba public efficiently, courteously and effectively. I would like to quote to the Minister. Her deputy minister said: "It is our intent to have this Web site provide relevant information to our clients." Does she not feel that that statement we are committed to is something that she believes in, that she can stand up and defend? Because, frankly, that is something that the whole world has accessed for the last 30 weeks under her being the Minister of Labour.

Ms. Barrett: I have stated on numerous occasions this afternoon, and I will perhaps rephrase it so it is clearer to the Member, I have accepted the fact that we have, and I will take responsibility as Minister for not ensuring that the Minister's Web page and the Web pages that the Member is talking about have not been updated.

What I am asking the Member for is an opportunity. I have not seen the statement. I have not seen in its entirety. I have stated to the Member that I am not trying to make this a political statement, but I think it is only fair that,

as a Minister who takes very seriously the Statement of Purpose, whatever goes on that Web page, whatever comes out of my department has to be—it is my responsibility to ensure that it is complete, that it is as up to date, as current and it reflects as much as possible, the purpose of the current Department of Labour.

So I am asking for the Member to allow me the courtesy to put in place my own Statement of Purpose, the current Department of Labour Statement of Purpose. I have not ever said that I disavow any of the elements of that Statement of Purpose. What I have said is that I need to look at it myself. I need to reflect. I need to take advice. I need to make sure for myself that the Statement of Purpose reflects the situation as it is currently in place. As I have stated earlier, the Statement of Purpose needs to reflect the inclusion of the Citizenship and Multiculturalism division. It does not because it has not been updated. I have accepted the fact and the responsibility for that not having happened since last October.

I have told the Member time and time again that I take responsibility for that fact. I will be updating it. I will ensure that that home page is interactive, that it is in both official languages, that it includes a statement of purpose, and that it includes a minister's statement. I have assured the Member that the Deputy Minister's letter is also updated and is interactive. I will ensure that that takes place as quickly as possible.

I think it is only fair that the Member allow me the opportunity to ensure that the Statement of Purpose reflects the current situation and that I have had an opportunity to say what it is that reflects my thinking and my government's thinking and the current situation of the Department of Labour.

I have not disavowed any one of the elements that the Member has referenced, but I do not think it is fair for him to say this is a component of a statement of purpose. It is my responsibility, and it is only fair to give me the opportunity to put in place a statement of purpose that is reflective of our government's position. That is the context within which I am responding to the Member's statements.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, this is not about not being fair or giving the Minister a chance to rectify it. Certainly, that is why we brought it up to the Minister's attention that it be rectified, for instance, that she no longer be called Minister of Justice and Attorney General. I mean, certainly that is something that we would want to have changed to Minister of Labour. I would like to point out to the Minister that it says clearly: Our department has a new minister effective October 5, 1999. Please click here to view the Minister's biography. A new minister's message will be available here in the weeks to come.

* (17:50)

Minister, if you read your own act that you are proposing, basically, if I were to look at this, I would say this is now your signature on the cheque, that on the Web this says: This is now the new minister's site.

Minister, I find it very disconcerting, and I know this Committee finds this very disconcerting, that you will not stand behind the Statement of Purpose that has been there for 30 weeks, give or take, that you have been the Minister.

I ask you: What does that say to the Department? I mean, this is a departmental statement. Nowhere here is there anything that says about a political party, and you can hear my colleagues on the Committee all voicing their concerns. I mean, what does it say to the Department that you will not stand behind this statement that has clearly been there publicly for the whole world to see? It says clearly; You are the new minister as of October 5, 1999. You are the new minister. You are in charge. This is your department—I do not understand. We are committed to consulting equally with labour, management, and other groups.

Why, in all the things that I have read, would you not stand behind the Statement of Purpose and say: Yes, for 30 weeks this has been the Web site stand. I signed off on this; I have been declared the Minister; this is my Web site; I stand behind it, Minister, and the fact that you are going to change it, absolutely.

How much time do you have left in your mandate? I do not know. You have all the time

in your mandate that you can change the Statement of Purpose, Minister, but until this point in time and until this Statement of Purpose is pulled off the Web, Minister, you should be standing behind the Statement of Purpose, and until it is pulled off and something new is put in its place—because it is as good as having signed off on it, when you were declared the Minister, it is just like a signature on a cheque.

I point out to you that the Deputy Minister clearly stands behind it. I quote: It is our intent to have this Web site provide relevant information to our clients. What does it say to the Department that the Minister will not stand behind her Statement of Purpose that has been her Statement of Purpose for 30 weeks when she basically signed the cheque, she basically signed the Web when it was announced that she was the Minister. Why will she not stand behind the Statement of Purpose?

Another quote for her: We are committed to providing information and support to our clients to enable them to act responsibly in respect to fairness, safety, health and equity. What would she have against that?

To achieve our purpose and goals we will subscribe to the principles of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funds. Next: To achieve our purpose and goals we will recognize that staff are our most important resource and the key to achieving our purpose. To achieve our purpose and goals we will develop a flexible organization responsive to changing needs and circumstances. To achieve our purpose and goals we will promote consistently the principle that safe workplaces, fair employment practices and harmonious labour relations are essential to the economic and social well-being of Manitobans.

Why will she not stand behind the Statement of Purpose that has been hers for some 30 weeks?

Ms. Barrett: The Statement of Purpose that the Member has read out was a Statement of Purpose that was developed through consultation and final ministerial approval by the former government.

An Honourable Member: By the Department, Minister.

Ms. Barrett: No, not by the Department. Would the Member please listen to some of the—at least make an attempt to listen to the numerous questions as they have been answered. I stated earlier, upon advice by the Department, when I asked about the genesis of the Statement of Purpose, I was told by the staff that it comes through the Department; it goes through the Deputy Minister in consultation with and final approval of the Minister.

An Honourable Member: You signed off on it.

Ms. Barrett: I did not sign off on that Statement of Purpose because I have never seen that statement of purpose. I explained to the—

An Honourable Member: Ignorance is bliss, Minister.

Ms. Barrett: Oh, you certainly would know about ignorance and bliss, sir.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Chair, it appears to me that the Minister wants to get into a direct debate with the critic without appropriately addressing the question that she was asked. Rather, she is making comments to the Member regarding his attitude and regarding the fact that perhaps he is acting in a way in which she does not approve. I do not think that has any place in the Estimates process, and she should abide by the rules of the Committee and continue with her answer, just strictly with her answer rather than straying from it.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Dauphin, are you on the same point of order?

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): The same point of order. On that point of order, Madam Chairperson, I have been listening to the debate continue on and on in the Estimates, and I could not help but notice that some of the debate is occurring through the Chair, using the microphone system that we have available.

I would add to the point of order by suggesting that the Member for Springfield (Mr.

Schuler) should wait his turn and speak into the mike instead of badgering at the Minister from his seat. So, if the Member has a problem with the way I conduct myself at the Committee, he can put that forward on a point of order, which would be acceptable and which would be playing within the rules of this Committee.

So I would suggest that there is no point of order, that it is a dispute over the facts, and that that would be your ruling. Again, Madam Chairperson, members opposite tend to think that they do not have to go through you and use the microphone system, that they can just cackle from their seats. I want to remind members that the rule is to go through the Chair and to keep their points of order relevant to the matter at hand.

Mr. Schuler: On the same point of order, to my colleague who just spoke, there has been considerable discussion that was not made into a microphone. He certainly did his fair share of it. At the end of the table, there were several ministers who also did not speak into the microphone, and they certainly had their share of it. At no point in time did I make this personal, Madam Chair.

I think there is a point of order, and I wish the Minister would restrict herself to answering the question.

Madam Chairperson: I thank all the members for their advice respecting the point of order raised. I will take the matter under advisement, so that I may peruse Hansard and will report back to the Committee.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Madam Chair. To carry on with my response to the question or the comment, rather, I believe the first question in this whole series of questions was how was the Statement of Purpose devised—if not the first question, one of the first questions.

Upon consultation with staff, I was informed that it is a process of consultation with staff, senior staff in the various divisions, in consultation among themselves, with the Deputy Minister and finally with the Minister who has

ultimate authority, because the Minister is ultimately responsible for the department's activities and therefore should have ultimate responsibility and approval and acceptance and familiarity and comfort with the statement of purpose, and that familiarity is the area that I am speaking to in stating to the Member my response to his long series of questions.

It is incumbent upon me to go through the same process that former ministers had the ability and the responsibility to go through, which is to take a look at the Department it has configured, to take a look at the priorities, to take a look at the goals and objectives of the Department—

Madam Chairperson: Order. The hour being 6 p.m., Committee rise.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Would the Minister's staff please enter the Chamber. We are on page 27 of the Estimates book, resolution 3.3 Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation \$6,614,000. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): We are on page 27, you said? That is item 1.(d)?

Mr. Chairperson: No, no, not yet. We are dealing with Agricultural Credit Corporation for two days now.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Minister could give me an indication as to how many staff we have in total in the Department of Agriculture.

If it is the will of the Chair and the Minister, I wonder whether we could go back to MACC. I think we had left an indication here yesterday that we would do the line-by-line approvals of the MACC heart of the budget. If that is the will of the Chair and the Minister, then I would ask

that we go back there and conclude that part of the Estimates. Then we can move on from there.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 3.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,614,000 for Agriculture and Food, Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001. Shall the item pass? No?

Mr. Jack Penner: Before we do pass that, there are only one or two questions I have. There is a reduction. I have not got the line-by-line before me here today, but there is a reduction in the MACC budget. I wonder if the Minister can explain to me why the reduction in the MACC budgetary funding this year over last year and whether she thinks that some of that funding will be reinstated next year.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Chairman, the reductions that the Member refers to have nothing to do with programming. There is a reduction in the amount required for the flood-proofing assistance loan, which we discussed earlier and which is in the process of winding down. Of course, there is a reduction in the amount of money required for the Producer Recovery loan as well. It is a decrease as a result of reduced activity due to the July 31, '99, application deadline for applications. So I would tell the Member it is because of those reductions.

Certainly as we develop new programs and as the corporation assesses the needs of producers and as the Board looks at these recommendations and brings forward recommendations of new programs, then we would certainly look at what the needs of the corporation are in order to fulfil the needs of producers.

* (14:50)

Mr. Jack Penner: So basically what the Minister is saying, Mr. Chairman, is that she sees this as a winding down of the Flood Proofing Program, and because it was terminated last July, as was indicated yesterday, this is simply an indication of what the winding-down process will look like. So there could be a

significantly further reduction in that line item for next year. Is that correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: Certainly in those two particular programs there will be a reduction as those programs wind down, but I also want to tell the Member that the reduction is also due to an increase in the estimated net interest income resulting in increased activities. So there are increased activities that are part of this, but there are also the two programs that are winding down. For those two particular programs, as they wind down, there will be less.

I want the Member to know, as I have indicated earlier, the corporation always looks at new programs. Should those new programs develop or there is a need within the agriculture community to develop new programs, then the funds are made available. But for these particular programs, because, as I indicated, the programs were completed, and one of them was completed in July 1999—less activity though.

Mr. Jack Penner: I am really sorry, and I do not want to believe this, Mr. Chairman. I had indicated yesterday that we would not pursue the Agricultural Credit Corporation part of the side of the budget yesterday, but I just want to make one comment: that if the Minister is seriously looking at a new program for young farmers and cause an easing of the turnaround pains in agriculture, then I would have thought that she might have added a provision within this budget to clearly indicate that that would be her will, unless she is telling us by fact of this budget that her programming is not far enough along that any expenditures could take place in this fiscal year. That would mean until next March. If that is the case, that she sees no additional spending on the new program that apparently she is working on, then I think we need to tell the young farm community out there that they should not raise their expectations high until at least after this fiscal year is ended, because there are no budgetary provisions in it. Having said that, I am prepared to deal with the line-by-line Estimates, and I am willing to pass the line that we were dealing with.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member has been around this Legislature for a long time, and he knows how the process works. I indicated to

him yesterday that we are looking at new programs and when you develop new programs, you take them to Treasury Board, you get approval; and then you do not put financing in place ahead of time if you have not got the program completely developed. I can tell the Member that, you know, I am very committed to the agriculture community and I recognize the importance of young people in this industry, and I recognize that we have an aging farm population and they are looking for some stability to their incomes. They are looking at ways that they can transfer their land, and we are working on those. I have a lot of faith in the staff that we have at MACC and the new Board. I look forward to their recommendations, and as those recommendations come forward, then we will follow through with that process and, through staff, we will develop those programs, take them to Treasury Board, and follow through the channels that are normally followed when programs are developed. Thank you.

Mr. Santos: What is the will of the Committee?

Mr. Jack Penner: I have a great deal of respect for being new in a ministry. Having been there myself, in a similar situation, I think it is difficult for a minister to bring forward a new program and realize fully what the financial expectations might be. I respect what the Minister is saying. However, normally, under normal conditions, I would suspect that the Minister might have brought forward an amount of money in the budget as an expectation of expenditures that would clearly indicate for accounting purposes, and I think the Auditor would have been very pleased to have seen that amount of money identified in a budget.

I know that does not always happen that way, but I think for all intents and purposes, if a farmer intends to make an expenditure in a given year, he puts a line in his farm budget and says, this is what we think we intend to spend this year. At the end of the year if they did not quite spend it, then, of course, he carries that over as a line item that was unexpended, and I would have liked to have seen something like that here to clearly indicate to the people of Manitoba that this is clearly an intent, and these are the estimated expenditures that we intend to incur herein this fiscal year. Having not seen that here,

I guess I think that leaves a doubt in people's mind whether there will actually be a new program in place before the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to pass the line that we were considering.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 3.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,614,000 for Agriculture and Food, Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

3.1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$463,500.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister indicate to me what the total employment contingent is within the Department of Agriculture?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, within this year's budget, the staff is 606. In last year's budget, it was 586.

Mr. Jack Penner: Are there any changes in the employment status contemplated for this coming year? Mr. Chairman, are there any reductions or increases in employment within the Department contemplated for this year?

Ms. Wowchuk: It is an increase of 20 staff for the Department of Agriculture and Food for this year.

Mr. Jack Penner: Where will these new people be employed?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, in the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, two term people will become full time. In the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, eight term people will become permanent, and there will be an increase of three; under Agriculture Development and Marketing, under the Livestock Stewardship initiative, one full-time equivalent in the Livestock Industry and two full-time equivalents in Soils and Crops. Also, in Soils and Crops there will be two additional full-time; under Regional Agriculture Services, under the Livestock Stewardship initiative, two

regional full-time equivalents. That, I believe, brings us to a total of 20.

* (15:00)

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Madam Minister, for that information. Under the line item that we are considering, Objectives, to provide leadership and to ensure that the Department's mission and goals, objectives and priorities are communicated effectively. How many people have we got employed in communications?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there are no people in communications.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, there are no people in the Department of Agriculture employed in communications?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jack Penner: Is that a change from previous years? Are some people employed in a communications role within the Department of Agriculture at any time?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that prior to 1988 there were communications people within the Department, but the previous government centralized all of those communications people into the communications department, and there are no communications people in our department unless the Member is referring to communications that we do through our ag reps and through home economists that we communicate to the public in that sense. But if he is referring to communications people in the Department, that was changed under the previous administration to a central communications body.

Mr. Jack Penner: I was quite aware of that, and that is why I asked the question. I was wondering whether any communications people had been brought back into the Department. That was the reason for the question. Mr. Chairman, if not, then how does the Department of Agriculture dialogue or communicate to that central communications group that is there, whatever? How do they get their information out other than the ag reps? When you do press

releases or those kinds of things, who does them for you? Does the central communications still do that?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it is very important to get information out to producers on various issues, whether it is various programs that are being announced or just vital information that is necessary for the farming community to have. So it would depend very much on what the issue is. It might be an issue that the Deputy Minister would deal with, but if it is an issue in the animal industry, well, then the director of the animal industry would draft up the points and the general message that has to be prepared. That would be then funnelled to the central Communications office. Then they would do the work, whether it is on a press release or a publication or any information, but the whole issue of getting information out to producers is a very important issue at present. I can tell the Member no changes have been made. That information is prepared through central Communications. Of course, after they prepare it, it comes back to my office and to the Deputy Minister's office for review. Quite often, there have to be changes made, if the language is not exactly what we want, but there is certainly communication between my office and central Communications when there is information that we want to get out to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Jack Penner: In Agricultural Development and Marketing, is that the line that we are considering?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Mr. Chairman, we are under Administration and Finance. Marketing is a little bit further down.

Mr. Jack Penner: Information Technology Services, what sort of resources does the Department use to communicate? What sort of technology are you referring to when you talk about Information Technology Services? Does this include the new site at Carman, the new processor for weather data and all that sort of stuff? Is that included in this area?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the item that the Member refers to is under Soils and Crops. The Information Technology Services that he is referring to now, under this service, there is the

co-ordination, planning and implementation and management of services of required information technology resources to enable the Government to meet its business goals, its objectives and opportunities.

Certainly, this is the Department that would look after all the computers that allow the Department to function. So, along with providing computer management services and expertise for all user levels within the Government, including the Crown corporations, which would be the Agricultural Credit Corporation and Manitoba Crop Insurance, the branch provides advice and counsel to senior officials on all information technology-related matters. This is to ensure that information technology resources are applied in a strategic, consistent and economical manner that will serve the overall department objectives.

Mr. Jack Penner: So you have, on item (d) Salaries and Employee Benefits of \$405,400. How many staff would be employed there?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there are six staff there.

* (15:10)

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, they basically look after the technological side, the computer side and all the other technologies that Agriculture uses. Is that correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: There are six employees that look after all the systems, all the personal computers, all the automated systems of the Department, Mr. Chairman. There is the administration and accounting section, the Human Resource Management Services, the IT services, all of the regional services, such as AgriBase, the Manitoba Agricultural Crown Lands, they would provide the services that are required there, as well as in the Animal Industry Branch, Soils and Crops and Manitoba Farm Business Management.

There is a wide range of programs. We are into this age of technology and everything we have is hooked up by computer. Certainly it is a very speedy way to get information, but it is also very effective in keeping the various offices

connected, the regional offices to be able to have direct hook-up to each other and to the other offices.

It improves the service that we are able to offer the producers of Manitoba and certainly there is a wide range of—these people have also created our Web site and operate the Web site, and I am sure the Member has had the opportunity to view that Web site. It certainly is a good Web site and very well used. The number of people who tap into that Web site, on a daily or monthly basis, is quite amazing. When I looked at those numbers I was quite impressed to see the usage that we have of it, so they provide a very wide service to producers and continually update the service that is needed in this new age of technology.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, the Minister referred to some aspects of the Financial and Administrative Services and some aspects of the Information Technology Services, and then she also made reference to Human Resources. Between the three of them, there is better than \$1 million expenditure, better than \$2 million, I would think that we expended there. I was interested mainly in the Information Technology Services, and she just touched on the Web site.

What other kinds of computer programs are being developed for internal and also external use by the Department? Is most of that information that is being developed available to the farm community and/or others that would want to access it, such as discs that are information discs, that sort of thing? I saw one at an ag rep the other day.

When I visited Vita, he showed me a disc of information. He asked whether I would want a copy of it and he was not quite sure whether he could give it to me. I was wondering whether most of the stuff would be public information. He showed me on his computer what all was available, and I found it very intriguing. I wished I would have had it a couple of months before that I could look at this because that would have led to a greater degree of information as to what sort of information the Department of Agriculture has. I commended the ag rep for that kind of information being available. I was just

wondering whether those discs would be available to farmers.

Ms. Wowchuk: I believe the Member was probably talking about farm plan. That is a program that farm management specialists have developed. It is a new computerized tool to assist farm business management. This program is used to test various product and financial management options to determine their effect on cash flow, net income, net worth and debt. Since it is useful directly to producers, it is available to the public through the Web site. So anybody can download it from the Web site, and if somebody wants to bring in a disk and have it downloaded that way it can be done.

There are also approximately 30 other existing farm management tools that are being converted from Lotus 1-2-3 to Microsoft Excel, including 24 programs that calculate the cost of production for Manitoba's major crops and livestock and six calculators that will assist with on-farm decision making. So there is a lot of information that is available out there. It can be accessed through the Web site, and it can be downloaded. Certainly, if there is need to, I am sure it can be loaded onto a disk for an individual, but we do not provide disks to people. It is much more reasonable to download it from the Web site.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if there are any costs to the individual when one does download it from the Web site.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, there are not costs to the individual if they download it from the Web site.

Mr. Chairperson: 3.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$463,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$68,300—pass; (3) Policy Studies \$71,200—pass.

Item No. 3.1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$771,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$546,100—pass.

Item No. 3.1.(d) Information Technology Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits

\$405,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$64,300—pass.

Item No. 3.1.(e) Human Resources Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$265,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$51,300—pass.

We are now going to Item 3.2.(b) which we left over last time.

Item 3.2. Risk Management and Income Support Programs (b) Net Income Stabilization Account \$19,200,000. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the Minister could give me an indication: The NISA line and the NISA administration, does the federal government pay for the entire cost of the administration of NISA, or is that cost-shared?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, under the Net Income Stabilization Account, the producers pay an administration fee and then the federal government pays the balance of the administration, which would come out of their 60% share.

Mr. Jack Penner: Is there no contribution to the administration by the Province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, we do have a representation on the national board or the advisory board, or whatever that is called. Is that a national NISA board, the administrative body? Do we have a representative there? And who is that?

* (15:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there is producer representation on this committee. Those producers are named by the federal government. The representative at the present time is a man by the name of Allan Chambers. The Department has a representative on that committee as well, and that person is Mike Lesiuk.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, is that a recent change?

Ms. Wowchuk: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I did not hear the question.

Mr. Chairperson: He is asking whether it is a recent change.

Ms. Wowchuk: There have been no changes. The representative appointed by the federal government has been there for several years.

Mr. Jack Penner: Then I understand correctly that these appointments are made by the federal government? They are not made by the Province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, Allan Chambers is the Manitoba person on the Committee, but he is appointed by the federal government and has been there for several years now. Mike Lesiuk is the department representative on the Committee, and he has also been working on this committee for some time.

Mr. Jack Penner: So we do have a provincial representative appointed by the provincial administration as an overseer for the Province, so we know what is going on, that we have a direct reporting of the activities within NISA back to the Province, so we are satisfied that we have a good information line there.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Lesiuk is an employee of the Department of Agriculture, and he is our representative on that committee and attends meetings. I am confident that he does a good job of representing us there and bringing the information that we need back to the Province.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, during the first response, I was just wondering whether there had been a change because this was the way it used to be, and I was not sure that there had been a change.

Mr. Chairman, on the \$19 million that is appropriated here for NISA, does the Province pay that into the NISA fund annually and does it stay there, that it generates revenues within NISA if it is not paid out to the farmers, or how is that treated? Is that retained within government, or is it put into the fund directly and submitted to the fund directly?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we know that this is a program that has been subject to a lot of discussion, and people would like to see changes to the program, and there are a lot of suggestions on that.

But to the particular question, the money from the Province is advanced to the federal government as they process the claims from individual farmers, and that money is credited to the producers' account, and the producers earn interest on their account.

But it is the federal government that holds the money and draws the interest but credits the producers' accounts so it is there when the producer decides to draw on that. But the money is held by the federal government.

Mr. Jack Penner: So, Mr. Chairman, what I am hearing is that it is a direct draw on the Treasury every year provincially?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member is accurate in that statement. When the producer makes an application for AIDA and his or her application is processed, then the money from the Province is advanced to the federal government and credited to the producers' accounts.

Mr. Chairperson: Should this item pass? This item is accordingly passed.

Resolution 3.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$52,011,400 for Agriculture and Food, Risk Management and Income Support Programs, for the fiscal year ending 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

We are now moving on to item 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Jack Penner: Do not be in such a hurry, Madam Minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might be able to introduce staff that have just joined us. Ms. Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, who is the Director of Marketing and Farm Management.

Mr. Jack Penner: Could you tell me how many people are employed in the Development and Marketing Division of this department?

Ms. Wowchuk: The whole division has 162 people employed compared to 157 last year.

* (15:30)

Mr. Jack Penner: From a development standpoint in agriculture, what is the main responsibility? I know economic productivity and marketing is a very broad term, but what are some of the main activities that this branch deals with every day?

Ms. Wowchuk: This is a very important department, and the Department deals with many issues, the international trade and development and promotion of products both for the domestic market and for the export market. Under this section we have the farm management, the home economics, the ag societies, programs like Agri-Venture, so it is an area of development of basically markets and promotion of the products that we have here in Manitoba. Certainly we work for the expansion and diversification of the agriculture and food industry and promotion of emerging technologies and work on pilot projects that would also be part of the promotion of the agriculture and food industry.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, does this also include marketing abroad?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the Member is well aware that Canada is an exporting country. Export is a very important part of the economy of Manitoba. In order to have those opportunities increase for our producers and to benefit the economy of Manitoba it is necessary to build good relationships with other countries. That is certainly a part of this department. Certainly we work with a wide range of countries to increase our trade opportunities.

Certainly the domestic market, the Canadian market is one that is very important, but there are also eight priority markets. Certainly our major market is the United States, one that we have to continue to recognize as an important market and work to ensure that even though they are just next door to us, we do not forget about that market. Sometimes it is very easy to forget about that market that is right next door. The Department works on promoting trade to the U.S. There is also promotion and work that goes on, as I said.

There are eight priority markets: the United States, Europe, Japan, Brazil, China and Hong-Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Mexico. We had the opportunity to have discussions, to touch on the importance of the Chinese market yesterday in our discussions. Certainly we have had a number of discussions on Mexico.

The Department also works on reaching out and doing trade missions, but there are also many incoming trade missions into Manitoba. Those are very important for us as well. This is the Department that organizes and meets those people that come in from other countries and ensures that they get a real good flavour of what Manitoba has to offer and hope that that will result in increased markets for us.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, how often, how many trade missions does the Department normally embark upon every year?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, is the Member asking about outgoing missions? In a normal year, Mr. Chairman, there would be anywhere between 10 to 15 trade missions in a year.

Mr. Jack Penner: Can you give me an overview as to what countries would be visited?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, in the last year there were two missions to Europe, five missions to the United States, one mission to Brazil, one to Mexico, one to Japan, and one to Korea, for a total of 11. I would also tell the Member that we had 38 incoming missions, and we had six missions come in from Japan, three from China, five from Korea, six from Mexico, six from Chile, two from Brazil, six from the Middle East, one from Australia, one from Africa and

two from Europe. I think the Member can realize from the number of missions that we have had coming in from countries like Japan and China and Korea and Mexico and even Chile, there is a tremendous interest in Manitoba. I think that is a credit to Manitoba to have that many people wanting to come and talk about and get information about our commodities such as our swine, our breeding stock, our horticulture, our beef cattle, and our breeding stocks and forages are of tremendous interest. There is a growing interest in our fruits and vegetables, field peas. People look to us for seed stock. So there is a lot of interest in what Manitoba has and a lot of opportunity within the agriculture industry for additional trade.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, does the Minister normally attend all of the delegations outside of the country?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it would be impossible for a minister to attend on each of those trade missions. Out of a total of 11, a minister might participate in two or three missions, depending on where they were and the schedule that they fit into. The department staff participates in the missions, as well as the representatives from the farm or the business community, depending on what the goal of the mission is and what the Department is trying to target.

Mr. Jack Penner: I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, whether the Minister would sometimes send a member of Government, a member of the Legislature, to stand in for her on some of these trade missions.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it is not the practice to send someone in place. If the Minister is not going, well, then department staff would go on the mission, but there are times when two ministers might go together on a mission. For example, Industry, Trade and Mines and Agriculture and Food would have issues in common that they could be working on, and two ministers could go on a mission together, but if a minister is not going, then it would staff that would be going.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, the reason I raise this question is because there has been,

from time to time, some questioning or criticism when a delegation from this province goes to make representation, especially in the areas of trade and market development and those kinds of things. I think it is extremely important that when a government mission goes out—I say this in all sincerity because I truly believe that it is important—that, regardless of which political party is in power, when a government sends a delegation in search of markets and new market development, they should try and ensure that a government representative is with that group of people.

I recognize fully what the Minister is saying. The Minister's responsibilities are very significant, and she cannot always be where everybody wants her to be, but in those cases where it is not possible for the Minister to attend, specifically when we are dealing with countries we are trying to get a foothold in, I would suggest to the Minister then that she should send one of her colleagues to represent the Province of Manitoba. Having been involved in meetings and conferences and those kinds of things, I recognise the importance that some governments put on the political side of government being present when these kinds of missions come. To me, it is extremely important, and I think we should not underestimate the impact of sending a representative on those kinds of missions.

I feel the same way, quite frankly, about a minister taking his or her spouse on those kinds of trade missions, because many countries also place a significant importance on the spouse being present, especially when social functions do take place, and they do. Having been in the Ukraine, having been in Europe, having been in many of the other countries, many times on my own, but representing Agriculture, you know what kind of importance they place on this.

I think it is extremely important that the Minister have an indication from me, as the critic for Agriculture, that she would never hear a voice of criticism extended if she intended to do that. As a matter of fact, she would have my absolute full blessing and encouragement to do that. Whether the media criticized it or not is totally immaterial. I think it is in the best interests of our province, when these kinds of

missions are sent, that that be done. I feel very, very strongly about that. I think sometimes we pay far too much attention to outsiders criticizing from an unknowledgeable base. It is simply a comment, and the Minister can, she does not need to, respond to that, but I just want to express my feeling in this regard.

* (15:40)

Ms. Wowchuk: Trade is very important for us, and market development is very important for us. The Member raises some good points.

I think, when we are making that first trip and trying to open the doors for trade, it is important to have a minister there. Those are the important times. But many of the missions that are follow-up missions are often repeat visits of people who are looking to continue on their business investment, on their business venture. For those, I do not think that it is always necessary to have a minister or a member there. When it comes to opening the doors and building those preliminary trade relationships, yes, I believe it is very important. The Member has made some suggestions, and we will keep those suggestions in mind.

Mr. Jack Penner: I feel sometimes that we, as politicians, are our own worst enemies when it comes to those kinds of things. That is why I wanted to put those comments on record.

We spend a huge amount of time away from our homes and our families. I think sometimes it is unfair that when we leave for a week or two, or sometimes even three, on these kinds of missions, that we leave our spouses at home, or that society expects us to leave our spouses at home. I think that is unfair, quite frankly. I do not think society really expects us to do that, but then there are always the detractors, I suppose you would call them, that might criticize. I just wanted to point out what my views were on this.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member is right in the comments that he makes about the time that members have to be away from home, and particularly for rural members. It is a challenge. I am not sure how often the Member is able to make it back to his home, whether he is able to travel back and forth on a regular basis, but in

my job, whether in opposition or on government side, when you live 300 miles away from the Legislature, I do not get home on a regular basis. I get home on weekends. When you go to represent the Province in other countries, you are away from home for two and three weeks. The Member raises the point. I wonder if the Member would care to clarify what he is suggesting here when he talks about spousal travel: Whether he is indicating that that should be part of a department expense, or is he asking that the spouse be able to travel? Certainly there is the ability to arrange travel. But I would ask him if he would expand on that a little bit, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I would be very pleased to expand on that. It has always been my view, and I have expressed it quite freely in my caucus, that, when ministers travel, there should be a provision made by the Department to accommodate the spouse, and the expense should be incurred by the Department. It need not be done frivolously, but realistically. I think that the airfare, hotel expense, and meal expenses, those kinds of things, need to be covered in the expenditures to ensure that the spouse—especially when you know that you are going to be travelling into the Asiatic countries where your spouse is expected to be at public functions, and other areas. You would certainly never get a criticism from me if the Minister did that. I say that in all sincerity, because I am a very strong believer in that.

* (15:50)

Madam Minister, you indicated the other day that your department was looking at a trade mission—was it to Asia?—in the near future. Can you tell me what countries the mission is going to that you were referring to the other day, and what the purpose of the trade mission will be? Will it be to look for the expanding markets in the pork industry or, for instance, the bison industry? Could you give me some overview as to what the intent is?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, there was a trade mission to Japan and Korea last March. I was not able to participate in that mission. The main focus of the mission to Japan was Food Ex, and we had four companies that went with their

products there. From Japan, the mission went on to Korea where the focus was on forage. There were people who were in the export business of forage, who participated in that one. I indicated, in our earlier discussion, the Team Canada trade mission to China, which the Premier will be participating in. As the Member, I think, is aware, there are some agreements that have been signed with China with very much of a focus on agriculture. Details of that mission are still being worked on. The work has also begun on a trade mission to Europe to participate in a pork show in Holland. There is a food show that Manitoba has participated in, in Paris that is being considered right now. I have been in discussion with the Italian Chamber of Commerce who has had a delegation here that is very interested in developing relationships in the agriculture industry, and looking at people who might be interested in investing in Manitoba. Those are the areas we are looking at right now, basically related to the pork industry and the food industry, but all of those are in the development stage right now.

Mr. Jack Penner: Most of these provincial trade missions that we embark upon, are they done in co-operation with Industry and Trade, or do we do them separately as departments without any or very little co-operation from the two departments' side?

Ms. Wowchuk: The two departments, Industry, Trade and Mines and the Department of Agriculture and Food, work very closely together on these missions so that both know what the other is doing and co-ordinate efforts. ITM has staff people in other countries that Agriculture and Food would work with as we prepare for these missions and certainly have those staff help us out when we are in another country. We work with other departments as well, such as the Citizenship staff when missions are going to Europe and other places. So there is a co-ordination between the various staff. In particular, Industry, Trade and Mines and this department work very closely together as we work to promote the trade and development of this province.

Mr. Jack Penner: I would like to move on to a few of the other issues that I think are relevant. What sort of involvement has the Department

had with the private sector in research and/or research-related activities in new food, new product development?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the food development is a very important part of the food industry and an important part of the Department. At the very preliminary stages, it would be ag reps and home economists that would be involved with probably the initial idea and that would put the individual who was interested in food development in the right direction. But certainly, it could be done through the Food Development Centre.

As the Member is aware, the Food Development Centre is now under the Department of Agriculture and Food. I am very pleased with that, because I think that there is real opportunity for us to work and develop more products in Manitoba. It can be through market development, as well, that these ideas can be developed. The development projects can be co-funded through ARDI, and there is the Manitoba Agri-Ventures where there can be funding available for business plans and development plans as an individual or a group of people look at how they can develop a new product. But there are several avenues that that can happen through, and certainly I think the initial one would be at the ag rep and the home economist level.

* (16:00)

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, Mr. Chairman, for the Minister's benefit, the name change in the Department—it used to be the Department of Agriculture, and now it is the Department of Agriculture and Food. The new name brings connotations and expectations that are different than what was there before. It has led some people to question why the name change, or whether there was a real change within the Department, and whether that meant that the Agriculture Department was now going to move similarly to what Ottawa had moved a number of years ago when they changed their Department of Agriculture to Agriculture and Food.

The food and beverage industry is a very powerful industry in this country, especially in some areas of this country. I think the agrarians,

the farmers in this country have always viewed the Department of Agriculture as their department, and the Minister being a proponent for the agricultural people in the country, in Canada. Having made the move from Agriculture to Agriculture and Food, and the beverage industry specifically being a very significant part of the old food and beverage department brings a very strong side of an industry that is not always in sync with the primary producer.

I am wondering whether the Minister—and I ask the question specifically what involvement the Department has in the development of food and the food industry, and whether this means that Manitoba will also bring into being the food and beverage sector side into the Department of Agriculture or vice versa, whether the Department of Agriculture will sort of play a lesser role in development and that the food and beverage side will become the main players or significant players within this department and will have a significant impact on policy development within this department.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when you look at the name of the Department, one of the changes that has been made is the Food Development Centre coming under the Department, and I think we all have to recognize that Manitoba producers and Manitobans as a whole are looking at ways to add value to their product. We have been an exporter of raw materials and we are moving away—we still continue to export raw product, but there is very much an interest in adding value to the product, and if you look where we have the largest growth in international trade, it is in processed products. That is where the markets are, and that is why there is this need to recognize that food development is very important and it is agricultural products that are being changed into another product.

We often talk about the need to make people aware of where their food comes from. Many times, and even when we are in the middle of this farm crisis that we were in with low commodity prices, producers would have come and talked about how important it is that we get people to recognize where their food comes from. Their food does not come from Safeway.

Their food comes from a farm, and it is important that we build this linkage, because it is the consumption and the purchasing of food that makes a difference to the farmer. We have to build that linkage between the product that goes onto a person's table and where it comes from. That is how we build that understanding that when the farming community is in difficulty, what is really happening and how much the farmer is actually getting from their farm product and what the consumer is paying for their product all ties in very closely together.

The Department has always worked with the food and beverage industry and has good working relationships with the Manitoba Food Processors and the chef's association. Those are all part of the food industry, and they have been and will continue to be an important part. The Department also plays a role in ensuring that we have on-farm safety, the whole HACCP program to ensure that that food supply is safe. The need to recognize where our food supply comes from, the need to work closer with people in the processing industry are all very important issues. It is a part of a change. As we shift away from being the exporters of raw product and shift towards the export of more processed food, there has to be a connection between the agriculture and the food industry.

Mr. Jack Penner: The reason I raised the food and beverage part of the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa and the changes that were made there, it always appeared to me as a producer of a commodity that was very significantly affected by changes made in Ottawa in the food and beverage side, and especially that agriculture sort of had a devolutionary change in its respect for the primary producer when that happened. I think it was no more evident than it was in the sugar industry.

* (16:10)

When the sugar beet lobby in Ottawa came to Ottawa after the changes were made in Ottawa, it was very evident that the beverage people who were large users of sugar had a very significant influence that was not always in the best interests of the sugar beet producers. I think it was quite evident that they made sure that their

views were known directly to the Department on an ongoing basis. So their lines of communication, I think, were improved, and it was in their best interest, in my view, to keep the American imports unrestricted and/or imports of sugar unrestricted and untariffed into Canada, therefore allowing them a significant competitive edge in the international marketplace in the exports which for the eastern cities was a great opportunity.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I did not fault the eastern provinces for taking the position that it was not in their real economic interest to have a significant expansion of the sugar industry in western Canada because it protected the labour that was employed in the beverage industry, whether it was producing beer or whether it was producing Coca-Cola or 7-Up or any of the other drink manufacturers or commodities used in the beverage side of the industry.

But it certainly changed the attitude. And the reason I asked the question of the Minister whether the food and beverage side sector in this province would be brought in under Agriculture as it was in Ottawa, and whether that is her intention to be more all-encompassing on the food side that the Department of Agriculture will eventually evolve, in her mind, into a food production department instead of an agriculture department.

Ms. Wowchuk: I know the Member has a lot of interest in the sugar beet industry and so do I, and I think that was a huge loss for Manitoba when we lost the processing of sugar beets here in Manitoba and the ability to grow that product because there was no market for it. The Member talks about Manitoba sugar being traded off for eastern manufacturers. Well, you know, unfortunately, that happens, but really the whole sugar beet issue was a trade issue, and we got traded off for a lot of things.

I want to assure the Member that this government is not going to trade off for our farmers. The priority of this department is to work with the producers and build a viable and healthy agriculture industry in this province. The

value-added and the food processing cannot be an issue in this province if we do not have a healthy agriculture industry and we do not have agriculture production, so that is the primary goal of the Department.

We are not trading off agriculture producers or farmers in order to have value-added or to have a food-processing industry. I think they can compliment each other, but ultimately our goal is to have a healthy farming community that can continue in the job that they do so well, and that is to produce food that is recognized around the world for its high quality.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I want to reflect a bit on what the Minister has just said. I am not sure if she truly believes that it was a trade issue. If she does or if her department does, then I think we have been on the wrong track all along because it was not a trade issue that caused the sugar industry to go down in this province.

It was clearly a government policy decision, whether they would want to conform to the same rules that the other 40-some-odd, and I believe there are 47 of them, sugar-producing countries in the world abide by. That is to provide protection for their producers.

It had nothing to do with trade rules. There were no trade rules that said you must do this, and you must do this, and you must do this. The country of Canada could have gone to the world trade round and said we will abide by the same trade rules as you do and we will apply the same program that you do. As a matter of fact, they were encouraged to do it time and time again by the U.S., by the Europeans, by all the sugar-producing nations, but Canada chose not to. It was simply a matter of policy.

I believe, quite frankly, that our province, and I do not care who the political parties were in power at the time, I believe that we did not have the expertise at the table of the negotiations at the time to truly make the case for western Canada. I say that of all the western provinces because we could have had a very significant industry here, but the people that were sitting there negotiating did not fully appreciate and understand what was truly at stake, and we did not make the case well enough.

I spoke to the International Sugar Institute when they met in Winnipeg here, Mr. Chairman, and I did a very significant presentation. I spent a horrendous amount of time doing preparation for that presentation because I thought it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lay out what I truly thought was wrong in Canada, and with the whole process of marketing of sugar in the world. It is not so much a trade-related issue that this country cannot do that and that country cannot do that.

It is simply an agreement very often between two nations or 47 nations, in this case, of how they will trade in sugar. The sugar lobby in the world is a vastly powerful lobby, I think second only maybe to the tobacco lobby in the world, and that is a very powerful lobby. So we were dealing with very powerful, influential people.

I was asked to make a presentation on sustainable agriculture, and I went home and I sat and I scratched my head. I was a new minister, at the time, of Natural Resources speaking to this international group, very influential people, and talking about what my views were of sustainable agriculture from a sugar-producing perspective. Some of you might have read the presentation I did. I wrote a 45-page document on it. So I presented that paper.

Some of the people, I guess, when they had asked me, assumed that I would speak from an environmentally sustainable side. So I made the argument in the paper that, No. 1, if you are truly concerned about sustainable agriculture, then you must ensure that the economic fundamentals are in place. Otherwise, you cannot underpin the environmental side.

After I finished making the case, I guess I disturbed some of the people, because I reflected on the huge tariffs that some countries use to protect themselves and/or the subsidization that goes on in other nations and how detrimental that was to the smaller sugar-producing nations and how unaffordable it was to some of them, making the case that the environment, in the end, would have a huge setback because of those kinds of initiatives that these powerful countries and wealthy countries were taking.

At the end of my presentation, the chairman opened it up to the floor, and I had been a bit longer than maybe I should have been, but I thought it was important. The chairman opened up the floor to questions and a big Dutchman got up in the middle of the floor, and he said: Mr. Penner, if this was a different time in history, I would tell you that you have just put forward a declaration of war. That is how extremely protective these people were of their positions.

All I had said to Ottawa, continually, is that if you are truly supportive of maintaining a sugar-producing industry in this country you must take that same kind of attitude, and you will in fact expand your beverage-producing capacity, because you will have the ability to supply internally in times when supplies are tight. That argument obviously did not fly because the beverage people, the beverage lobby, was able to convince the politicians that you should not put in place the same kind of protective policy that all the other sugar-producing nations had.

Now the reason I raise this at this point, Mr. Chairman, is it is important from a national perspective to realize how we are influenced in our policy decision making by outside influence having no interest in primary production. I ask the Minister again whether she can give me an indication as to whether she wants to expand the Department of Agriculture and Food to include the whole food production capacity within this province, including the beverage sector and all the other sectors that are relevant to food.

* (16:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the goal of the Department is to promote agriculture at the farm level to support and build a viable agriculture industry. Part of building that industry is to get value added to create a market for the farmers so that they can continue to grow the products that they can grow, increase their production in product. That is the goal of the Department. The reverse is not the goal of the Department, to build the processing industry. The goal is to promote a viable agriculture industry in this province.

The Member talks about the sugar industry and his presentation, and I know he must have

given a very passionate presentation, but he says that it is not a trade issue, but listening to his comments, it is very much a trade issue. People have decided that they want to protect theirs, people use sugar in trading. Part of it was we lost our quota. Manitoba lost the quota that they had to ship sugar into the U.S., and that was one of the reasons why we lost it.

But Canada has a cheap sugar policy, and we have some of the most efficient producers in—we had—in the country, right here in this province. But, because of the policies and the fact that cheap sugar comes into this and it is part of the trading patterns and that is a decision that Canada has made to allow the sugar to come in, and I guess it fits in with other trading that goes out of Canada, that is what has happened.

I would certainly like to see the sugar industry come back in Manitoba and allow for producers to have another crop that they can rotate. Producers have that equipment on hand, and I am sure that there is still a lot of that equipment there. If there were the ability to start the industry again, that would be wonderful. But, with the processing plant gone, I think that that will be difficult. In fact, I believe that there were attempts made just recently to try to make arrangements with Crystal Sugar to have the raw product go to Crystal Sugar, and that attempt at a deal was not successful.

Again, I want to reassure the Member that the goal of the Department is to promote agriculture at the farm level, to continue to produce the high-quality product. Along with that production comes the value added, and I think that there is opportunity for growth in value added in Manitoba. We have a lot of raw product, and we are processing hogs now and we will be processing more hogs. Maybe there are opportunities that you can get even further processing in hogs with the pork product. We process canola, maybe there are opportunities to process it to a higher level. That all fits in with development, and certainly it fits in with the marketing and trade of this branch.

If we can develop the markets where they will take the product that is finished to a higher level, that helps our Manitobans as a whole, but it creates another market for our producers.

Mr. Jack Penner: The Minister and I obviously will disagree on the issue of whether Manitoba lost its sugar industry because of trade issues or whether it lost it simply because of a will of government to implement programs and protection for its industry as other 47 sugar-producing agents do. The quota loss to Manitoba had a very minimal impact on the loss of the industry. We were not that dependent on the U.S. sugar quota. The reduction of that portion of the quota did not cost us a lot of the industry.

The argument was made by the company continually that they could not compete in the eastern market because of freight rates, and that was a total cop-out as far as the company was concerned. Freight had very little to do with getting sugar into the eastern market. The plant at Drayton, North Dakota, ships a major portion of its sugar production into the Chicago market, and if they can compete in that Chicago market under their terms, then we surely would have been able to compete in the Toronto market under our terms. Yet it was simply a matter of policy that our federal government chose to use, and I think, Mr. Chairman, that history will show that that was a mistake.

But until that happens, you and I will tend to disagree, that it was a trade-related issue that caused the downfall of the industry, because I will never be convinced of that. It was simply a matter of politicians in Ottawa not wanting to exert their will to ensure that the industries here would be on the same footing that other industries were in the rest of the world. That is as simple as it is. Sometimes it just takes commitment.

The Minister mentioned the pork industry and the related spin-off industries in that area. Our previous minister of agriculture made a very significant decision when he chose to disband the single-desk selling authority in this province. I know the Minister has commented from time to time on that, Mr. Chairman, and I wonder whether the Minister could give us a bit of an overview as to what her views currently are of the marketing process in the province and whether she intends to make any significant changes in the marketing of pork in the province from the primary sector as well as the from the secondary product sector.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, when the single-desk selling was eliminated, there was the establishment of the Manitoba Pork Marketing Co-op and the Manitoba Pork Council, and there were some agreements that had been come to at that time.

One of them, in particular, was the need for the ability for the Manitoba Pork Council to be able to collect their levies and the need for price disclosure. That is one of the things that we are working on, working with the industries, the processors in this province to assure they are doing the proper reporting of the sales they have, so that Manitoba Pork can collect the levies on all the hogs that are sold in Manitoba, and we are working to get better reporting on pricing, and that is something the Department is working on with the processors, because that is a concern for producers, to ensure that they are being treated fairly in this environment, and we continue to work to ensure that that pricing is available for producers.

* (16:30)

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, the Minister has on a number of occasions indicated a willingness, if producers came to her and asked, that she would be willing to reconsider the establishment of the single-desk marketing authority. Is that still her opinion?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, at the table we now have Mr. Dave Donaghy, Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Ag Development and Marketing.

Mr. Chairman, I have had many, many meetings with producers, and what producers have been asking me for is that we pass the information order, so that there is proper disclosure of the number of hogs that are sold here in Manitoba so that the levies can be collected and that the dollars can be used for market development and research, and that is what we are working on. We are also working to ensure that there is the proper reporting of pricing.

Those are the requests that I have been having from the producers, and those are the requests that I am working on now.

Mr. Jack Penner: I wonder, Mr. Acting Chairman, whether the Minister could indicate to us how many representations she has had in her office asking for the return of the single-desk authority.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Chairman, as I indicated to the Member, I have had representation. I have met with Manitoba Pork Council. I have met with representatives from the industry. The main issue raised by producers is the fact that they want the information order passed, so that Manitoba Pork Council can collect the levies that were part of the agreement when single-desk selling was eliminated. There was this agreement that the processors would provide certain information, and that has not been happening.

So we are working on that, and that is the request that we are getting from producers that Manitoba Pork Council have this information and that there be a proper price disclosure. That means that the companies would report their numbers of sales and prices, and we have to work out a system. The reporting is required, I believe, on a weekly basis. Producers have raised the issue of having more frequent reporting of these prices, so that they can have a better idea of what hogs are selling for on a particular day so that they can make a comparison to what they are receiving for their hogs versus what the market is. That has been the main focus of discussion as I have met with representatives of producers in the pork industry.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Acting Chairman, I wonder whether I could ask the Minister then more directly whether she can give me an answer. I guess she is avoiding the answer, because I thought I was rather clear on whether she would give me an indication of how many—now I am going to ask how many people had made presentations to her requesting the return of single-desk selling.

Could she tell me whether she has had 5, 10, 20, 40 or 100 requests, or more or less than that, for return of the single-desk selling authority to the province? I think the farmers have a right to know whether there are a lot of requests coming to return to the single-desk selling authority, or whether there are no requests coming to return to

the single-desk selling authority. I think the Minister needs to be forthright with her producers, because she is the advocate for all producers, not just one side of the production cycle.

So I ask the Minister whether she wants to be straightforward and open and stand by her producers, and whether she wants to protect the small family farm, and whether she wants to ensure us and give us the numbers as to how many calls she has had in her office or had personal representation made to her for requests to this single-desk selling authority.

Ms. Wowchuk: The growth of the hog industry, since we have taken office, has been a subject of a lot of discussion. We know that with low commodity prices farmers are looking for a way to diversify their incomes, with the change of the Crow, which certainly has hurt our producers, they are looking to add value to their product. One of the areas that they are looking at is livestock production. Now that could be hog production, it could be cattle, and certainly I think that there is a tremendous opportunity in other species. When I look at the demands of world markets, I think that sheep and goats could become areas of growth in this province. Given our land base, I think that we have lots of opportunities for livestock production.

Since taking this office, I have attended Manitoba Pork Council's semi-annual meetings, and I have attended their annual meeting. I believe I have met with all of the processors in this province, and we have had a lot of discussion about the growth of the industry and what has to happen to ensure that that industry grows in a sustainable way. Certainly the issue that is on the minds of producers in Manitoba is the need to have price disclosure. That was one of the commitments that the previous government made when they signed the agreement to disband single-desk selling and when they disbanded it they made some commitments to the producers. The commitment they made to the producers was that the information would be provided so Manitoba Pork Council could collect levies, and the other was that there would be price disclosure. Those are the issues that I have had discussion with, and the issues that have been raised with me by

the producers of Manitoba saying that there were commitments made and asking that we pass the information order in order to facilitate this to happen. I have very recently had discussions with the processors, and I hope that we can move forward with that soon.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The Member raises the issue of the family farm, and I think that he and I would both agree that the family farm is a very important part of the agricultural community in Manitoba, the farm family is a very important part of the agricultural community. I very much want to see the farming family survive and have an opportunity to make a living whether it is in the production of grains, in livestock or in some area of value adding. The family farm plays a very important part in our rural community, and I am very much committed to it.

* (16:40)

Mr. Jack Penner: It is quite obvious, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister does not want to answer the question and that tells me that there has been a significant change of attitude in the Minister or maybe even a change of mind in the Minister. If that means she is not considering going back to single-desk selling in this province, I think that is encouraging. I think most producers would find that encouraging. If I can take that from her response as being reality, then I feel quite comforted, and I will attempt to convey that to my producers when I meet with them that when I asked the question, the Minister clearly did not give a response saying that she was returning or even contemplating returning to single-desk selling. That is a significant change from where she was only a very short while ago when she said that, if the producers requested it, she would have no difficulty returning to single desk selling. She is not saying that today. I find that encouraging, and I congratulate her for having changed her mind on that.

Can I, Mr. Chairman, ask where we are at in the development of a processing facility for what we call exotic meats in this province? When I sat as a member of the governing body in this province, we had numerous presentations from a

number of groups that were interested in developing and building a processing facility that would process such things as emus, ostriches and wild boar, and many of the other exotic species that we have, and I believe, including elk and bison and all those kinds of things, might have been processed and killed in that facility. I refer specifically to a group from St. Malo that I had a lot of dealing with. They were in my constituency, and I am wondering whether there has been any progress made, whether the Minister could give me an indication as to what progress has been made in the development of a slaughtering facility in this province.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the exotic meat industry is one that, in certain areas, has seen its ups and downs, and some have been successful. Certainly some of them have come to the stage where you have to have processing for them to be successful. I know that I met with some of the producers of various species who face real challenges. If they go to the regular abattoir, they do not fit right into the system. As a result of that, they end up paying very high prices to have their livestock processed. So there is a real need for a multispecies facility, one that might be able to handle the emu, the ostrich, and we have other small animals, sheep and goats.

There are also people who are interested in processing bison. I had an individual in my office who is looking at developing a market in, and has contacts in Europe for, horsemeat. Those are not traditional varieties that we look at in Manitoba, but certainly there are markets around the world for it, and a need for a processing facility.

There have been two or three groups who have been to the office and talked about their plans. We are in the process of looking at a business plan for one particular group. We certainly hope that they will be successful. But this is not only an issue for Manitoba, Mr. Chairman. We have two representatives on a joint committee for the western provinces, looking at ways that we can address this issue in a joint way for the western provinces. I indicated to the Member also that there was a group here from Italy that is interested in exotic meats. It is our hope that we might be able to encourage

them to invest, and bring some of their technology, because they certainly have some very sophisticated technology and have been working in the meat industry for a long time. If we would be successful in attracting them here, that might also help for the producers of some of these exotic species that are at the present time at the mercy of processors who can charge them a fairly hefty price for their product. That is certainly not encouraging them to continue on. It is an issue that we recognize as being a very important one. I certainly hope that the business plan that we are looking at now will be successful or there will be other ventures that will address this need that the producers of exotic species have right now.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Minister could tell me whether any of the proponents that we were working fairly aggressively at some of this less than a year ago are still pursuing this. I think there was a group from St. Malo, there was a group from Virden, there was a group from Selkirk, and a group from Lundar. I think they were all involved with the same co-operatives or associations, whether they were the ostrich association or the emu or the wild boar co-operative or the goat marketing co-op or the bison or the elk producers. I wonder if she could give me just a very brief answer, yes or no, whether there is any real, sound pursuit of this processing venture currently in the province and whether she thinks it might become a reality, an exotic meat processing and slaughtering plant in the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it is very difficult to say yes or no on this particular issue, because we are talking about individuals. What I want to say to the Member is that there are people who were working on it and other people who are working diligently trying to put together a proposal. They are working with various aspects of the industry, the livestock industry, to see whether this kind of a processing facility can be built. We have had contact with the Bison Association and with other people. We certainly when they come to us make them aware of the people that are interested in this kind of facility.

To say yes or no to these proposals that were there before, that is very difficult, but I could assure the Member that there are people who are

pursuing this. I certainly hope that they will be successful, because it is important to us to have that processing here in Manitoba.

* (16:50)

Mr. Jack Penner: I would like to ask whether there has been any change in support for the Women's Institute. I know the Department works with the Women's Institute. I do not know whether there is any financial support given to the Women's Institute at this time or whether there is any support staff that is designated to working with the Women's Institute. I think we all realize, Mr. Chairman, the importance of women in agriculture and the significant work that the Women's Institute has done on various projects, whether it is day care projects or day care for, in all kinds of working, helping work with 4-H projects and delivering in many cases tremendous helping with the structures and organizations of farm conferences, women's conferences and all those kinds of things, developing policy and ensuring that there is an ongoing partnership in agriculture. I know the Minister of Industry and Trade has met—maybe she has not got as much respect for women as I do, but I have a tremendous amount of respect for women in agriculture and the contribution—

Point of Order

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): My point of order is that the Member's questioning assumed that women's roles were secondary in providing services such as day care, he suggested. I would like the Member to recognize that women in farming have been primary producers for generations, and in fact are equally as competent and capable in all sectors of farm life. So, as the Member talks about the role of women in farming, I just want to ensure that the record is clear, that women are equal partners in the farming enterprise.

Mr. Chairperson: Disputes as to opinions and matters of fact are not points of order.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, again, her comments just reflect how naïve she is in her

perspective of the importance of women in the rural communities. Women do play a major role in helping us devise programs that families, young families can, in fact, partner in agriculture and be partners in the production cycle and ensure that their children will be supported at the same time and cared for.

The Women's Institute and many of the farm women's organizations have lobbied long and hard to get a day care system in place in rural Manitoba that would enable and allow young women to participate in the primary productive cycles. There are many women today who not only work on the farm and drive tractors and trucks and everything else that comes along but they are also the secretaries, the financial managers. They are also the people that serve on school boards. They are also the people that ensure that the fundamental foundation of agriculture is maintained, so let this Minister of Industry and Trade not try and indicate that those of us that live agriculture do not understand the role of women, because the Women's Institute has been a primary player in developing educational training processes that will encourage young women and young men to stay on the farm, not like some others that have vacated their position in agriculture or have vacated rural Manitoba and gone somewhere else.

These women stay in agriculture. These women work in agriculture, and these women and the Women's Institute has been a main player in ensuring that the primary sector will have that kind of involvement. I have a great deal of respect, and I, quite frankly, think that we should offer through the Department of Agriculture a lot more support to the women in agriculture through the home economists program.

You know, I saw two young women the other day at a function in Woodmore, at a 4-H rally in Woodmore, and one of them had driven all the way out from Beausejour and one from Grunthal to spend the evening with the kids and help the continuation of the 4-H program. The 4-H program is a tremendous educational program that we have and the Women's Institute, the women in agriculture are the ones that are normally the 4-H leaders, and they are normally

the ones that work with the kids to encourage them and teach them the fundamentals of agriculture. These two women that came to Woodmore were Department of Agriculture employees, gave of their time that evening freely to come out there and participate in the activities. So let this Minister of Industry and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk) not try and put herself off as the all-knowing about women because all of us that are involved in agriculture know the tremendously important role that women play.

When I look at the ag societies, whether it is the ag societies, the Century Family Farms or many of the other programs that are initiated in rural Manitoba, and when I look at the thousands of volunteers that daily participate in community activities in rural Manitoba, you see a large, large number of women. So, I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that it is because of these women that agriculture is still where it is today, because if it were not for both partners working hand in hand and side by side, many of the farms would not survive today. It would simply be impossible. Very often those same women take jobs off the farm during the winter months to support that family because it cannot support itself from the income that it can derive out of a \$1.50 bushel of oats. And if this Minister of Industry and Trade was serious about the comments that she made, she would probably offer to pay \$3 a bushel for the rolled oats that she buys across the counter instead of \$1.30.

So I think it is in all sincerity that we recognize the contribution that women have made through activities and the leadership role that they have played in organizing activities that other women can participate in in the development of policy that will make agriculture and rural Manitoba the better place to live in.

The question I had for the Minister was: Could she tell me what sort of contribution the Department of Agriculture makes to the Women's Institute and whether that is as a direct donation and/or whether that is a line item in her department?

* (17:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to thank the Member for those comments and his support for women in

the rural communities. But I also want to thank my colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) for her comments and the words she has put on the record about the role that women play, and indeed women do play a very important role, and the traditional roles of women are changing. Women were the homemakers in many cases, but the women, in my opinion, are the backbone of the farming community. I strongly feel that way.

If anybody got to watch television last night about the two pioneer couples that are going out to live in the wilderness for a year, it is not two men that are going out to live in the wilderness, it is two couples. It is men and women going out there together to experience the pioneer life, and women play a very important role. The Member opposite talks about the role of women in agriculture, and I have to say that I am very thrilled to have the opportunity to serve as the first woman Minister of Agriculture in Canada. I am very proud of my other colleagues in Cabinet who have taken on some roles that are not always traditional roles for women and not necessarily providing and working in day care. There are a wide range. The jobs that women do are much different.

I want to tell the Member that 55.2 percent of the staff in this department are women, and I have to tell him also that we have many dedicated staff in the Department, both men and women, who give many extra hours of their time, whether it be to 4-H or other community activities. Because many times it is the people in the Department, that end up being the leaders in communities, that are very important.

You know, I wish I had a copy of a speech that I heard last night about the role of women and what women do for family. In fact, it was Arvel Gray who was speaking at the Federated Women's Institute of Canada's triannual conference in Brandon, where I had the opportunity to bring greetings last night. Here we had women from across Canada, representatives of Women's Institutes. In fact, there was a representative from Ireland there, who spoke very eloquently of the importance of the Women's Institute and the role that the Women's Institute has played in bringing forward some very, very important issues.

I always think back. I do not know why this particular issue stands out so much for me, but it is the whole issue of safe milk supply. The Women's Institute played a major role in ensuring that the milk supply in Canada would become a safe milk supply and played a role in ensuring that we had pasteurized milk. But women have been involved in lobbying for farm safety, for better regulations and all kinds of things. They have played a very important role in the industry, and the Department recognizes the role that the Women's Institute plays.

In fact, the Manitoba Women's Institute celebrated their 90th anniversary in April of this year, and I had the opportunity to meet with women and congratulate them on this important event.

As a department, Manitoba Agriculture and Food provides a provincial grant of \$35,300. The home ec sector provides supports of \$6,500 in a year in terms of office space, telephones, meetings and board meeting expenses. So the Department recognizes the role that the Women's Institute plays in community development and in education and for bringing forward important issues.

We continue to support them and encourage them to continue on the path that they have had for many years in improving the quality of life in rural Manitoba and in rural Canada, but also bringing forward issues and lobbying on issues that affect all Canadians.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to hear the comments, especially in regard to women and day care. I want to say to you that when I was first elected, my first encounter with a day care was in Winkler, Manitoba. When I walked in the door, it was a young man that was the manager of the day care in Winkler and did a very proficient job. In Altona, it is a young lady that runs the day care centre, and I think she does a wonderful job.

To me, caring for kids, especially in day cares, is one of the most important jobs that we could have anywhere in this country because day cares have become a very significant part of the raising of children, whether it is in our province or anywhere else in the province. I very often

believe that we should pay a much, much greater degree of attention as to what kind of people we hire in day cares or what kind of a training we require for day care workers because they are the fundamental—what they teach kids in those day care centres. Instead of children being taught at home nowadays as traditionally used to be the case. The mother would take care of the children and when there was not a mother, the father would. The care of the child would be done in the home. That is not the case anymore. So, to me, it becomes the day care centres and the providers within the day care centre become a pivotal point of societal development. What those children bring home from day care or what they learn in day care is going to be extremely important.

I find it very interesting that the Minister will try, in her comments, almost to the point of menializing the day care worker's job. I think, to me, that is one of the most important ones. A woman in the bank as a bank manager, in my view, would not be rated as high as a day care worker would be in the scale of importance to society. I do not care whether the people are men or women in those capacities.

But the day care workers, the people caring for our children—*[interjection]*—and I know that this is not an important issue for the NDP. I mean the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is nattering from the background. Again, I am just indicating that they have not got a very high regard for these people working in day cares. But, in my book, they are tremendously important and we should pay a lot more attention to their welfare and the welfare of our children in our day care systems.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I know we are debating Agriculture, but the Member has just indicated in his comments that we do not, as New Democrats, place a very high value on day care workers. I would ask him to check the record as to which government it was that fully recognizes the value and the high role that day care workers play and who is the one that raised their salaries in recognition of the very important work they do.

I just want to put those few comments on the record. I see that it is the Member from Portage

who wants to ask a question so maybe I will let those comments pass by.

Mr. David Faurischou (Portage la Prairie): I am just joining the Committee at this point in time, understanding we are in deliberations regarding 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing section of the Estimates process. Could you confirm that for me, please?

* (17:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits of Marketing and Farm Business Management under Agricultural Development and Marketing.

Mr. Faurischou: Thank you very much for confirming that, and I understand, though, that we can have global questioning within the section at this time. I would like to bring the Minister to two topics, (e) and (f), which are of great importance to the constituency of Portage la Prairie and the persons that are engaged in farming. Line (e) identifies the expenditures related to Irrigation Development. I would like to ask the Minister to perhaps express a little more elaborately the expenditure that we are discussing at this time in the amount of \$822,500.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could just clarify with the Member. We are on (a) right now and I wonder if they are prepared to pass (a) so that we could move on and then bring the appropriate staff in.

An Honourable Member: No.

Ms. Wowchuk: No.

Mr. Jack Penner: We had at the beginning of this process agreed that we could really range from the whole global area of Agriculture when we started the Estimates process and agreed that we would give the Minister notice as to what areas we wanted to debate the next day. However, the Minister has chosen to tell her department when they will be required, and we are quite amenable to that, but we are now discussing the Marketing Managing area. It is my view that we had agreed that we could range wherever we wanted without passing lines.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I was just asking for clarification from the Member if they were finished with this particular section of Marketing, so the staff related to the Marketing and Development side could leave, and then the staff that does the other section would join us.

So I would ask the Member for just a bit of clarification, if we are finished with the Marketing and Development.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the Minister saying that the staff related to Irrigation is not present in the Chamber?

Ms. Wowchuk: That is right.

Mr. Chairperson: With that limitation, would the Member for Portage proceed?

Mr. Faurchou: Is staff present who would be able to answer related questions to the Food Development Centre located in Portage la Prairie?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Faurchou: Perhaps we will commence with line (f) regarding the Food Development Centre, which is located in the constituency of Portage la Prairie, and has been a very vital component located within the McMillan Industrial Park, north of Portage la Prairie.

This is a recent acquisition by the Department of Agriculture and Food as to the administrative component from that formerly known as Rural Development. I would like to ask the Minister at this time to clarify the position where the Food Development Centre is within her department and to perhaps update myself as to the analysis which, I understand, is ongoing as to the future of the Food Development Centre. If she could provide that this afternoon, I would certainly appreciate it.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member raises the issue of the business plan. Indeed, that business plan is ongoing and it will be completed later this year.

But, certainly, I have had the opportunity to visit the Food Development Centre and

recognize the valuable work that is done there and certainly recognize that there is a very dedicated staff that works with the producers of Manitoba. I was quite impressed by the number of products that have been developed at that centre.

The Food Development Centre has been brought under the Department of Agriculture and Food, basically because we think that with the growth of the agriculture industry, there is more and more opportunity for value-added, and we think that there is a need to tie the production of the raw product and the development of value-added products. That is the reason for combining the two areas.

The Food Development Centre is a special operating agency and has a board in place, and, as I indicated, they are looking at the business development plan and preparing for a long-range strategic plan to address its capabilities to meet the industry's needs to provide sound, proactive guidance and the ability to participate with the producers in the development of food in this province.

* (17:20)

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the Minister for her comments. Without question, a business plan is the most necessary foundation for the success of any entity, regardless of being operated under government administration or in the private sector.

I would like to ask the Minister, in regard to the business plan, are we considerate of thoughts and most understanding of other entities that are of like mandate, and I speak specifically of the GRL, the Grain Research Laboratory, here in Winnipeg, in the federal Grain Commission building on Main Street, where they, too, are looking at processes of value-added operations, involving cereals and oilseeds.

I am wondering whether there is liaison in the business plan, because I am aware of co-operative ventures that have been previously undertaken and to great success between those two existing entities. The Minister's response, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Food Development Centre works very closely with many other similar organizations, and certainly in the area of grains and oilseeds, they would be working very closely with the GRL that the Member mentioned. They work very closely with CIGI, but they also work very closely with—and I am in communication with similar institutes in other parts of the country, for example the institute at Guelph, the institute at Alberta and the POS in Saskatoon. But also there is research and development going on at the University of Manitoba. So all of those institutes keep in close contact, and when there is research in areas of grains and oilseeds, there would be connection.

But the Food Development Centre also does some research into very unique projects that are not being done at other institutes. So they have created their niche market as well. I think about the pickled carrots that have been developed at the centre for a couple of people in. I believe they are from the Rosburn area. I was there and saw the samples of roasted hemp.

So there are various products that the Food Development Centre works on that are unique to the centre, but there are other areas of development where there are other institutes that have developed, that are known for their research in those, and we would not want to see duplication. We would want to see complementary research going on between them, and, certainly, we should be. The Food Development Centre does draw from the knowledge that is available from other similar facilities across Canada.

Mr. Faurichou: I thank the Minister for her comments. I am most certainly aware of the unique products that have come through that facility. In fact, just last November, we were responsible for the very first raspberry wine label in the province's history, thanks in part to the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie. So we are breaking ground on numerous fronts.

What concerns me greatly, though, is the ongoing activity of that centre. It has been well known to not only those who staff the facility but those who have been engaging employees of

the facility's expertise, the costly nature of research. Without adequate partnerships with government—and this is an area I wholeheartedly support, government's participation in the area of research because research pays great dividends, I believe that the Food Development Centre is one vehicle for this particular area in the value-added farm products that we so desperately need in the agricultural sector.

Having said that, the current budget for the Food Development Centre is identical to that of the previous year, which leads me to the question that not even inflation has been considered here. I do know that there has been a diminished partnership arrangement with Norwest Labs that was previously assisting in funding the operations of the Centre.

I might just lead that right to the point which I have raised with the Minister in the past, and that was the Agri-Food Research line that is yet to come up in the discussions that was reduced from \$2.6 million to \$1 million. I truly believe that once one loses dollars out of a particular budget without reassigning it to like expenditures, the money is difficult to return to this area.

Coupling those two points, I am very much interested in the Minister's response as to her commitment to value-added and funding the research that is required in this particular area, knowing very well that the Food Development Centre in Portage has requested additional levels of funding. I believe that the \$1.5 million annual funding was a figure that was believed more appropriate to the activity that they are carrying on there.

The reason I also ask this is that when government participates, partnered with private enterprise, I believe there are significant dividends, but if government is not willing to be there in partnership, we do lose opportunities. I would like to leave it there, because I am certain the Minister has accumulated quite a number of responses because I have covered quite a wide area here.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member has covered a wide range of areas, but I am going to comment on the ones related to the Food Development

Centre. He indicates that the budget remains the same and he is disappointed in that budget, but I do not know if the Member is aware that this government has paid off the accumulated debt that was at the Food Development Centre of over \$320,000.

We feel that by paying off that debt of \$320,000, that is going to free up funds and give more flexibility to the Board and for the operations of the Development Centre, because that ongoing debt that was there for several years kept pulling the Food Development Centre down and gave them less flexibility, Mr. Chairman, in what they were able to do. I would think that the Member would be quite encouraged to learn that this government recognizes the importance of the centre and the difficulty that they were facing and has taken the steps to take that burden of the debt off of them.

The study, the business review is ongoing and we will see the results of the business review and then we will move forward. The funding for the Food Development Centre is going to very much depend on the results of that business plan.

The Member also raised the issue of the Norwest Labs and the contract there. I am sure he remembers that it was his government that began the process of negotiations with Norwest Labs to allow them to pull out of the agreement, but I want to tell the Member that that issue is still ongoing and is in discussion. That is as much as I am prepared to comment on that particular matter at this time.

* (17:30)

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate that the situation with Norwest Lab is one with restructuring and reorganization. It did have a significant part to play in regard to the ongoing operations there providing dollars that were expended in other areas that the Food Development Centre was engaged in.

I raise the issue of level of funding, and I do appreciate the Minister's response, because I was unaware of the debt being retired, because we all know that the monies that are required to service a debt are lost. That is why, perhaps to digress, we are most conscious of the government's

continued pay-down of the provincial debt, which takes millions and millions of dollars from programming or out of the pockets of the Manitoba taxpayer, who could, I am certain, make better use of it.

Returning to the Food Development Centre and the proviso of programming, on numerous occasions clients come for original orientation to the facility and are impressed as the Minister has stated here with the capabilities of the Food Development Centre, but what takes over after one has seen the operations is the actual engagement of partnerships. On many occasions the dollars that are required for an individual, fledgling, value-added operation and their rather scant budgets, on many occasions they are not able to afford the services of the Manitoba Food Development Centre.

I believe that in the business plan an understanding of perhaps lost opportunities, instead of saying that perhaps it would cost \$7,000 to work with this particular recipe or this particular process, that if it was in the realm of two to three thousand dollars, maybe that would have gone ahead. Maybe there are other departments that could have a shared interest in it, and I see the Minister of Industry and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk) here as well, that when a very viable plan is presented to the Food Development Centre, and they are unable to come together with an affordable solution, the discussion does emanate from that position to perhaps other government departments where interests may be served as well, so that this particular project is not left wanting and goes unfulfilled.

That is why my concern for the level of funding for the Manitoba Food Development Centre incorporates within their business plan; it is to recognize the situation so that we do not lose these opportunities.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Member could clarify for me, is he suggesting that through the Food Development Centre there should be provided free research on products that are brought there to be developed?

Mr. Faurichou: I am not suggesting that in the least, because when they have invested interest

in a particular project, the individuals will genuinely work the hardest if their own hard-earned dollars are invested in the project.

But what I am saying is potentially—and I know of individual products that have not gone ahead in the Food Development Centre because they have just been too costly. The Food Development Centre had made a proposal to the individuals stating that their co-operation would require \$12,000 to bring this particular recipe to a commercial product. The individual did not have \$12,000. They would be able to garner perhaps \$5,000. In this particular case, the project went by the wayside and was not heard of again.

These are the situations where I think we have to give a really hard look at the viability of the project and not just dissuade the individual from going ahead with it because of this first initial hurdle. Whether there are other accounts it can go on from other government departments, or how it might be handled, but I do know that once that initial orientation and analysis is done of a particular project, and it is too costly, the person walks away. That is what I am trying to address. Nowhere am I suggesting that any service should be free.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member raises important issues, but my understanding is that the average-sized project is about \$5,000, and certainly there are some that are much larger than that. I would like to see them offered for a more reasonable price, but, you know, we have the operations of the Centre that would have to say, well, where is that money going to come from if you are going to do that?

But, certainly, what I would be encouraging people who have projects to do—and I believe many of them are viable—is to look at other options of funding. I would encourage them to go to ARDI which also offers funds for research and development, and MRAC. These are two avenues where funds can be obtained if the project is viable, once they have gone through the preliminary, but, you know, I certainly look forward to the business plan coming forward and other things that we might be able to do as a department to support people who want to develop products. But I also think that some of

that preliminary work has to be also done between the ag reps and the home economists when someone is trying to develop a product, that those people begin their preliminary discussions at that level through the ag offices, through the ag rep or home economist. As you work through that, maybe other areas of funding can be identified in order to ensure that good projects do proceed, Mr. Chairperson, that they are not held up because of lack of funding, because I think that there are other alternatives there and we would hope that people could access those funds.

* (17:40)

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the Minister's willingness to discuss this issue with me this afternoon. She speaks of communication, and that is the most important element in our dialogue here this afternoon, communication. There are other opportunities to undertake projects that are of research nature, but a lot of times people coming out for the very first time are unaware of these avenues of support. This is a very significant service that I believe the Food Development Centre should be able to convey and be knowledgeable of. Should they have opportunities of which I speak, they can counsel these individuals into the other avenues of support. I am very gravely concerned that so many times we are so caught up in our own areas of interest and employs and we are not wary of others that are related to our activities.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member does raise a very important issue. I think that there are staff there that can do some counselling, some of the support. I think this fits in with why we moved the Food Development Centre into this department, Agriculture and Food, because it is in this department that we have the ag reps and the home economists that have the expertise and are usually the first contact point for people who are looking at new developments. Whether it is processing potatoes, which the Member is very familiar with, or whether it is processing, getting some value added to beans, it would be the natural contact to come forth to the ag office. In fact, the acting CEO, who is at the table here today with us, Mr. Dave Donaghy, is also on the R&D board, so we

have a connection there, with the various aspects of funding.

I believe that there are the skills amongst the people that are working at the Food Development Centre in counselling people, but I think that it is a natural for this special operating agency to come under this department and tie into all the other expertise that we have within the Department.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the Minister's response. I want to draw one particular occurrence here, because there are staff changes, and one is not always up to speed as to replacing the individual. Communication, as I say, is most important. I want to cite the situation in which the Minister of Industry and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk) is most familiar with, and that is the operation of Crocus Foods Limited in Portage la Prairie, which processes prepared salads and incorporates the use, also in those salads, of carrots. It has prepared carrot processing as well. The Food Development Centre was looking for carrots for a particular juicing opportunity. Here we have in the same community two operations, one wanting carrots and one has surplus carrots because of the culling and shredding process which is the perfect by-product for juicing, and you had no communications. It was just because of personnel changes and the autonomous nature of these enterprises.

These are the situations that we can ill afford in the area of agriculture. I am not certain to this day that there is a mandate within the Food Development Centre to go about sourcing products in the agricultural community if they find that there is an inquiry or a niche market that they have come upon, that they could satisfy with Manitoba home-grown product. That is a fundamental requirement at the Food Development Centre, that they have knowledge of the products of Manitoba so that they can source them. I would appreciate the Minister's remarks on that.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, certainly, Mr. Chairman, no matter where anybody works in the agricultural industry, and particularly in this department we would hope that they have the knowledge about Manitoba's food and products.

The Member cites a particular issue. He also cites the fact that there is changing staff, and that is one of the challenges that the Food Development Centre has faced. If you look at the record, there is a continual change in staff. It has not been easy to maintain consistency in that staff. There have been some who have been there for a long time, but there have been changes in staff.

But the Member cites a particular case that I think is quite a unique situation because I think that the knowledge as to whether or not there are carrots available in southern Manitoba where we have a large vegetable growing industry—I think that there has to be some miscommunication somewhere because, no matter what, people who are in the food-processing industry should know that we have carrots here in this province.

I would suggest to the Member that maybe there is a little bit more to the story than that, or there is certainly some weak communications between both places, and it is something that should not happen often in Manitoba.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I am not going to want to put on the record the considerations of those employees in research and highly technical areas, but we do know that as one tends to get more defined in expertise, they narrow and continually narrow their focus and understanding. So sometimes we have individuals who have such a high degree of skill and expertise that they may even be unaware as to what is going on across the laboratory from them because they are so intense on their own projects.

I think this is maybe one of the situations that resulted in this. Certainly the personnel in development know there are carrots within the province, but they were looking at whole carrots, and the cost of whole carrots would not make this a viable entity. However, once carrots are processed for the packaged baby carrot market, there is up to 60% cull in the shredding process, and this is product that essentially heads out to the field as non-valued item.

If there was some small value that could be garnered from the shredded component, it would

have made this project work. I think that is where we have lost something in the translation.

* (17:50)

This is where we come back to consistency in staff and understanding. The communication must be there between the personnel, which the Minister has already reflected upon, that being the home economists and the Agriculture representatives that are very stable within this province. That is where the Food Development Centre must be introduced, if there are personnel, that they are just coming into the Food Development Centre. There should be an orientation for those new personnel that can get to know the other agricultural staff that are stable within that community so they can offer their knowledge of the area. So the new staff is cognizant of that information and able to be much more proficient in their operations. I would like the Minister's comment.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member raises some very valid issues, the whole issue of the people knowing what is going on and where the particular products are. That is why I think it is very fitting for this special operating agency to be under the Department of Agriculture, where we can have that communication and have the Agriculture staff, whether it is the home economists or the Ag reps make people aware of it.

The Member also talks about orientation, Mr. Chairman. Well, I have to tell him that the Department is one step ahead of him, because that is exactly what has been happening since January, where under the new acting general manager that kind of orientation and education is taking place within the Food Development Centre.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, I appreciate that that step has been taken and I am certain that it will bear fruit. I know that there is a lot that can be accomplished in value-added processing here in this province and there have been extensive additions to the fraternity of the food processors here within the province of Manitoba in recent years. I am certain there is going to be much, much more. I certainly wish the Food Development Centre all the very best. I will say

that a product such as, on the shelf, known to all of us as Pringles potato chips, that particular product is a by-product of the potato industry, where you take the culls and the potato mash and make Pringles out of them. They have come to be a very high-value product, much more so than potato chips, which come from the a-line potatoes. So you have higher value placed on b-line and cull potatoes than you do on the a-line potatoes. So it is all in the food processing, value-added end marketing that is necessary in this regard. I would appreciate, I know there is some discussion across the way. I would like to provide the Minister with the opportunity to comment.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, coming from Portage la Prairie, the Member is certainly familiar with the potato industry and the processing of potatoes and the value that can be added to that product. He talks about potato chips, but my understanding is that there is very little that is wasted. There are many products that are developed from those culls and from those edges or trimmings that come off the potato.

The Food Development Centre has played a role in the development of those products. He talks about Pringles potato chips, but there is also Potato Nuggets and other products that are part of that whole process and very important. The food processing and the value-added industry are very important to Manitoba. I look forward to seeing the business plan and the review that is happening right now. I am looking for the results of that to see what steps we have to take to ensure that we do indeed have the proper research and development for food products in this province.

Mr. Faurchou: Thank you very much for the Minister's response, Mr. Chairman. Having worked on the line in McCain's, I am very familiar with the different processes. The flaking that goes on from the by-product of the potato chip line is one value-added operation.

However I was just wanting to bring forward a particular item that has significant value attributed from a by-product, just strictly through marketing, which brings me to the point of marketing.

Marketing of the Food Development Centre is a key element in its survival. We have residents of Portage la Prairie who do not know the Food Development Centre exists. If they do know it exists, they do not know where it is located. There is very little profile given to the Food Development Centre in this province. I know there is a highway sign. I know there has been some co-operative information about the Food Development Centre go out through Peak of the Market. There has not been a great deal of marketing of the Food Development Centre and the resource that is in existence for those persons looking at value-added products.

This is one concern that I have, and I do believe that other government departments should be aware of this resource as well. Should the Minister of Industry and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk) have the opportunity to see a presentation of Manitoba-grown edible beans in a particular recipe elsewhere, outside the province, or a particular culinary product of Mexico, for instance, she could come back to Canada and to the Manitoba Food Development Centre and relate this to that agency so that we could get underway to fill an opportunity for the edible bean processors here in Manitoba.

So I would encourage the Minister of Industry and Trade to take a little time—I know her busy schedule—to make herself familiar with the tremendous resource that the Government of Manitoba has at their disposal to provide for value-added food products which are exported to 120 countries around the world from the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member does raise a very valid point, and part of it has been financial constraint. Since we have taken over government, we recognize the importance of food development, and that is why we brought it under the Department of Agriculture, now known as the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Through the Department there are department exhibits that the Food Development Centre is now being incorporated into. There are four brochures, four, that are being developed by the Department right now to promote food development, and I think that is a big step, a big

change that has taken place to now have four brochures from the Department of Agriculture and Food that are promoting the Food Development Centre, a new display that will be on display at many events promoting the Centre.

That is why I think it is such an important step that we have taken to bring this under the Department, where the many tools and resources that we have within the Department can be used to promote the development of new products in this province. We feel that this is very important, because if we can develop value added, that gives opportunity for producers to grow products and add to the income of farm families.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the Minister's response. I think that there is a bright future for the Food Development Centre. If all lines of communication can be pursued so that even if there is not an agricultural product already grown in Manitoba, we have the Manitoba Agricultural Diversification Centre in Portage La Prairie as well that could undertake the study of agricultural products that are not already grown in Manitoba and could find the agronomics for this new product and make certain that we have that opportunity.

I want to leave the Minister knowing that there is just a couple of minutes to ask her for some certainty in the lives of the staff that are at that Food Development Centre in Portage La Prairie. It is a very vital component located in our industrial park in Portage La Prairie. As the Member for Portage La Prairie I would like to ask the Minister for her assurance that that particular entity will continue operations in Portage La Prairie.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will answer very quickly. I realize we are just about out of time, but as I have indicated to the Member, there is a business plan that is being worked on right now. We look for the results of that business plan, but certainly we recognize the importance of food processing and value being added to his products.

Mr. Chairperson: The time being 6 p.m., Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

for the Estimates for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker I would like to table the 2000-2001 Departmental Estimates or Supplementary Information for Legislative Review

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the Honourable Minister to table the report. *[Agreed]*

The hour being 6 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 7, 2000

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Gerrard 2214

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)

Finance 2215
Justice 2216
Labour 2245
Agriculture and Food 2274