

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 14, 1989.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Economic Growth Manitoba Rate

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in his opening remarks to the First Ministers' Conference the Prime Minister spoke with pride about economic growth in Canada. He took great pleasure in referencing a number of provinces where growth has been particularly strong. However, he did not mention Manitoba, and with some good reason.

Mr. Speaker, since this administration took office there has been a net loss of 7,000 Manitoba jobs. Housing starts in this province are down almost 50 percent and 268 Manitoba businesses have gone bankrupt in the last nine months leaving more than \$56 million in unpaid liabilities.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us why there are 7,000 fewer Manitobans working today than in May of '88?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Well, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) could not have been watching very closely, because the Prime Minister did specifically mention Manitoba in his remarks. They may not have been in the printed record, but obviously the printed record was what his prepared notes were. He did, as well on two different occasions, refer to Manitoba's growth rate as being amongst the highest in the country.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that—

* (1335)

An Honourable Member: Where?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, the growth rate in Manitoba is projected to be 3.7 percent, a full percentage point higher than the national average. In fact at its recent review the Conference Board projected that we would be growing by 5 percent this year, one of the two highest provinces in the country.

The Prime Minister did indeed make note of that, because Manitoba's growth rate is very positive. Things do look very optimistic, and we are very delighted with that.

Government Strategy

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, rebounding from a drought is not real growth. Manitobans are leaving this province. In fact one of the reasons why our unemployment statistics are not as bad as they really are is that nearly 10,000 people have left the province.

The net loss of residents last year was the largest since the Lyon years and next year it is predicted to be 13 percent higher. Mr. Speaker, the Premier often speaks—in fact the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has spoken at length about the Government's new vision, a different way of managing.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why are so many Manitobans rejecting his vision of this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about visions of this province by the Liberal Party. The Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) goes to public fora in Toronto and Vancouver and calls us "a have-not" province. Now that is a real inviting approach. Now that is designed to make people feel good about the province that you represent, to go around the country and poor-mouth the province that you come from. That is something she should be ashamed of; that is the Liberal vision.

The Liberal vision of this province is that we should have higher taxes. They have the opportunity to see taxes go down in this province, to have a 2 percent reduction in income tax for every Manitoban, to have an average savings of \$450 per family, and they vote against it because they want higher taxes for this province. They are against lowering the payroll tax, they are against reducing taxes for Manitobans, 470,000 taxpaying Manitobans. They are against it. That is the Liberal vision of what we should do in Manitoba. They ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Osborne.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, we are becoming increasingly have-not under this leadership.

Personal Bankruptcies

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): We now lead the country in personal bankruptcies. During the last nine months, over 1,000 Manitobans have gone bankrupt. How does the Premier account for that?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there would have been many, many more people bankrupt under the Liberal policies that they projected. The Liberals, during the past year alone, Mr.

Speaker, advocated \$700 million more be added to the deficit or the taxes of this province. That was what they did day after day after day during the past year. Their idea of how to make Manitobans better off is to impose \$700 million of additional expenditures to raise the debt so that they would have more interest to pay, or to raise the taxes of this province by \$700 million. That is a crying shame, that is why Manitobans have no concept and no idea of supporting the Liberal vision, because it would cost them money in their pockets and would drive more and more individual Manitobans into bankruptcy.

* (1340)

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, this Government's record is 7,000 fewer jobs, a 53 percent increase in personal bankruptcies, a 70 percent increase in corporate bankruptcies, and people moving out of the province. Will the Premier answer the question?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member's question is repeating in substance a question which was previously asked, and therefore out of order.

Unemployment Rate Women

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, women over 25 have been particularly hard hit. When this Government took office last May only 4.6 percent of that employable group were unemployed; today 7.4 percent are. Now how does the Premier account for this record?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, since this Government has been in office there have been, looking at the continuum of January -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Osborne would like to look at the statistics that have been presented I would recommend that he look at January to October of 1989, versus January to October of 1988, the entire performance of the first 10 months of this year, because that is what people base it on, not fluctuations from one month to another.

Mr. Speaker, employment increased 1.5 percent, 7,000 persons on a seasonally-adjusted basis; full-time employment increased 1.2 percent, 5,000 persons on an actual basis; part-time employment increased 2.4 percent or 2,000 persons on an actual basis; unemployment decreased 3.8 percent or 2,000 people on a seasonally-adjusted basis; and the unemployment rate decreased 0.4 points to 7.4 on a seasonally-adjusted basis.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Filmon: So over a 10-month period, which is what you are looking at as a year-over-year basis, we have done much better than last year, and we are very proud of that accomplishment.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I am looking at the 18-month record of this Government.

Federal Equalization Payments Reduction

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, on a new question. In the Prime Minister's opening remarks at the First Ministers' Conference, he stated that federal transfers are simply too large to be exempted from efforts to control our deficit. These transfers fund health care, universities, child protection and a wild range of services to vulnerable Manitobans.

To the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), these transfers have already been reduced because of actions taken by the federal Government, and they were reduced further in this last budget. Can the Finance Minister tell us what further reductions he is expecting, as a result of the Prime Minister's statements?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, equalization transfers for '89-90 are forecast at \$852 million. At this point in the fiscal year, we appear to be right on path toward that figure.

With respect to '90-91, it is too soon at this point in time to indicate what specific number we will be working towards with respect to equalization. I would think and I would expect at this point in time there will be some small increase in the total number of dollars coming to Manitoba under equalization in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the federal Government is right now making their decisions about their budget, which will be announced in April. In light of the Prime Minister's statements, can the Finance Minister of this province clarify for us what the Prime Minister is speaking about?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Member is not aware of the methodology in place as to how we as a province ultimately determine and find out from the federal Government how it is and what it will be, in the form of a quantitative measurement of our total transfers. That information is presented to us in a next to final form, usually in late January or during the month of February.

At this point in time, we are led to believe that particularly with an equalization, particularly within the Canada Assistance Plan, that there will be some increases, and with respect to the established program financing area that there will be more or less a static number.

Economic Growth Initiatives

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we warned the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) last week that the Prime Minister is going to cut back on our transfer payments. We were disappointed that it was not in the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) statement at the First Ministers' meeting last week.

My question is to the First Minister, and it is based on his statement at the First Ministers' meeting. At the

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First Ministers' meeting, the Premier of the province said, Manitoba is on the move. Maybe the Premier should have said that Manitobans are on the move, right out of the province.

* (1345)

My question to the Premier is, what is he going to do to keep Manitobans in the province? What is he going to do to keep Manitobans in the province? What is he going to do with the fact of the matter that Manitoba has the second worst bankruptcy rate for business bankruptcies and the worst rate for consumer bankruptcies in 1989 of any other province of Canada? What is he going to do about it to turn around our economic opportunity for families in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know after I made that opening statement the Leader of the New Democratic Party is quoted as saying I did an excellent job and that he really agreed with everything I said. Now he has changed his mind when he gets back to this Legislature. He says one thing in Ottawa and another thing in Manitoba. Will you make up your mind?

Mr. Speaker, clearly Manitoba has the second highest overall tax regime in the country, thanks and courtesy of the New Democrats who were in Government for 15 of the last 20 years. They put in place punitive taxes that tax jobs, that destroy jobs. They put in place tax measures that burden down individuals and businesses so that they could not compete with other people across the country.

Since we have been in Government we have lowered taxes. We have reduced the deficit, and we have done all of those things to ensure that we can have a more competitive climate.

In a speech that was given a couple of weeks ago by Mr. Jack Fraser, one of the captains of industry in this country, he said that the New Democrats had created such a negative climate in this province that it was impossible for any business to look at opportunities. That is why we are starting to look at ways in which we can change that climate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: You have a lot of trouble quoting Mulroney's fundraisers in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, in terms of objective financial analysis. There used to be a sick joke in this country around 1980-81—the last one out, please turn off the lights. That was under Sterling Lyon, and we are starting to see it under this Government as well.

Job Creation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is, what is he going to do to reverse the job creation situation in Manitoba, which is ninth in Canada, in terms of reversing the situation where Manitoba's employed has gone in 1989 to a certain level back to 1985, as opposed to other provinces where it is advancing in terms of job situations in the country? He has gone four years back in 18 months.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Really, Mr. Speaker, the answer is economic growth. That is exactly what is happening in Manitoba's future. We are projected to have the second highest overall growth of any province in Canada this year, and next year we are projected to be above the national average again—above Ontario, above Alberta, above many provinces in this country because our policies are starting to demonstrate to people that there is confidence to be put in Manitoba, and investment to be put in Manitoba.

Employment Training Program Implementation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): The numbers clearly indicate that there are 12,000 people -(interjection)- The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) makes a comment from his seat. There are as many people less in the labour force today in Manitoba than there are in the whole community of Portage la Prairie, in 18 months. My question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is -(interjection)- Well, it is about 10,000 to 12,000 people. My question to the—well, that used to be under NDP, it has probably gone down under Conservatives, Mr. Speaker.

* (1350)

My question to the Premier is, will he reinstate some of the job creation programs that were in effect before, which obviously resulted in full-time jobs? There are 13,000 less full-time jobs in a year and a half than there was when the Government started.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The Honourable Member for Concordia.

Mr. Doer: Will he reintroduce some creative jobs for future programs, job training programs with the private sector to get this economy going rather than driving people across to other provinces?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I will quote the Leader of the New Democratic Party as to what he thought were the biggest effects of the Jobs Fund when he was then president of the Manitoba Government Employees Association. He said they created more jobs having people put up those green and white signs than they did in anything that lasted in the Province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what he said.-(interjection)- He said that was the major accomplishment of the NDP's Jobs Fund, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's policy of short-term, make-work jobs that resulted in nobody being left employed after the money was spent, resulted in higher taxes, higher debt, and the poorest business climate in this entire country. We are not going back to that.

Economic Growth Government Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): In October of 1987 there were 413,000 full-time jobs

in this province. In October of 1989 there were 407,000, Mr. Speaker. Any way the Premier tries to cut the rhetoric, he is failing in creating full-time jobs and full-time opportunities. Also he has assigned to this province the for sale signs, the foreclosure signs and closed signs in this province. The Premier smiles, but he is doing nothing to get the economy going.

My question is, what economic strategy has the Premier got for Manitobans so that we can stop this exodus out of our province and start providing opportunities for Manitoba families in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, lower taxes for individual Manitobans; 2 percent reduction in their income tax; increase in their tax deduction for children from \$50 to \$250 per year; a savings to individual taxpayers of \$61 million per year; lower business taxes; the payroll tax being eliminated. For 70 percent of those who had been paying it prior to our taking Government, now they are off the payroll tax. Reduction of the debt—what is it leading to? Five percent growth, the second highest of any province in the country, and projected to be above the national average in economic growth next year. That is the policy, that is the direction, and it is a very positive one.

Repap Manitoba Inc. Swan River Plant Delay

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and concern the Repap opportunity. We understand that 60 people have been laid off in Sprague as a result of lack of cutting rights, and the Members will remember the Swan River plant was designed to replace and fulfill a need for a waferboard plant there, and tree cutting rights were integral to that part. Now we see that the Minister, after seven hours of meeting with Repap officials, they want to renege and withdraw the Swan River development.

Mr. Speaker, I asked yesterday what the impact would be on The Pas and the Swan River facilities from the delay in the communities, and I wonder if the Minister would be kind enough to tell us what the negative impact of the delays that are anticipated will be?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, with due respect, the question is almost incoherent. I have trouble really gaining from the question specifically what it is the Member wants to know. Let me say though that Repap has absolutely no intention in withdrawing from the Swan River area.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, the question yesterday and the question today is the same. What is the impact on these communities from the delay in action that is being perpetrated upon us by this corporation? What is it going to cost us in delay?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard the Member say that the delay was being perpetrated by Repap with respect to the communities. As I indicated, Repap is at this point in time still waiting for the Environment Commission to make a report to the Department of

the Environment as to whether or not there should be a licence granted. That has not occurred yet. Repap is well within the terms of the agreement, and indeed can do nothing until the Government, after hearing from the Environment Commission, decides whether to grant a licence or not.

* (1355)

Asset Recovery

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): My question is to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). Is Repap going to be allowed to continue to remove \$1.5 million a month, or \$18 million annually, from Manfor's bottom line? If the corporation defaults, is any of that money recoverable in any way?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Member to state his case in greater clarity. Is he today alleging that \$18 million a year is being made at Manfor and is being withdrawn from the Province of Manitoba? I can assure the Member that the Government of Manitoba has a tremendous amount of call on any liquid assets of old Manfor, so to speak, and consequently his thesis is completely wrong.

Crow Benefits Impact Rail Lines

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): A few days ago, made available to us was the consultant's report on the impact of a change of payment of the Crow benefit. While this is a rather superficial report, it is admittedly a preliminary one, but it does open up quite a few questions. One of the things that it makes very clear is that a change in payment would result in a major increase in the producer's cost of shipping grain, particularly for those producers who are on branch lines.

My question is to the Minister of Transport. Does the Minister have any projections that would indicate what change would occur in the utilization of these branch lines as far as grain shipment is concerned, and how would this impact on rail line abandonment, rail line rehabilitation and associated freight services for people on those branch lines?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we have grave concerns as to what the possible impact would be. It is for that reason that I have people of my staff who are on the committee that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) has set up to look at the impact of any changes in paying the producer, because most certainly if the movement was in that direction, we anticipate there would be changes in terms of rail line abandonment. It would probably escalate that. There would also be an impact on municipal and provincial roads. Most certainly these are things that we bring forward to the committee, and bringing our concerns forward in terms of potential impact that it would have. We do not have any specifics on it at the present time.

Impact Highways

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): The Minister has alluded to the impact that this would have on the road structure, both the highways and the market roads. Does the Minister have any information as to what the increase in maintenance costs would be, or to put it bluntly, how much would it be and who is going to foot that bill?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think it is premature to speculate as to what the cost would be because the action has not been taken. This kind of action is under discussion at the present time. Once something more definitive comes down—my staff is looking—but it is very hard to establish what the trends would be until we have a definitive policy that comes down.

Crow Benefits Impact Land Values

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): A final question, and this one would be to the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Penner). It is clear from the report that the increase in costs of grain shipment to the producer would be somewhere in the range of 300 percent to 400 percent. Can the Minister give us any indication of what impact this would have on land values, particularly in areas where producers are producing grain specifically for the export market?

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans) asks a question that I think he does not have an answer for and neither do I have an answer for. However, I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (1400)

Mr. Penner: —want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe the study that is under way and the consultations that are going to take place with the communities in this province will give us a fairly clear indication as to what the assessments of the communities are on the impacts that they are going to incur and the economic benefits that might in fact accrue from this sort of a position.

Thompson Crisis Centre Closure

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Services (Mrs. Oleson) in regard to another crisis situation in her department.

At the end of this month the Thompson Crisis Centre will be forced to close the office it has had open for

more than a decade in Thompson. In fact it is having to relocate entirely to the shelter in our community.

What is more, this will result in the loss of many services the centre has provided up to this point in time, and the centre is faced with a situation of running out of funds by the end of this year. All we have seen from the Government is an audit. There has been no commitment to long-term funding in dealing with the critical situation facing the crisis centre.

My question is to the Minister. Will she intervene personally to ensure that the crisis centre does not have to close down its office in Thompson and to ensure that it is able to continue to offer the very needed programs it has offered for more than a decade in the community of Thompson and throughout the North?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Yes, my staff have been working for some time with that particular agency to ensure that we get all the details of the problems concerning their deficit, and certainly it is not the intention of the department to close that centre.

Minister's Intervention

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am asking the Minister to intervene directly because the Crisis Centre is going to be closing its office at the end of this month, and that will result in cuts in providing counselling to men, for example, which is 10 percent of its caseload, and result in cuts of services in other areas.

I would like to ask the Minister, will she intervene now? We are only two weeks away from the situation where they may have to close their office, and while they will be able to continue some services in the NorWin Shelter, they will have to eliminate many of the services they offer currently.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): It should be evident to the Member with the increases that this Government has made in the whole wife abuse field that we are interested in the perpetuation of these badly needed services to women. I will inquire further as to the situation as it is today, but my understanding is that the department has been working very closely with this group and hopes to resolve their problem.

Service Reduction

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I have final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the funding increases are not helping the shelter in northern communities, I would like to ask, will the Minister look at maintaining the current services and providing the same type of services available in Winnipeg, in particular a funded 24-hour crisis line which is not available currently, is run totally by volunteers, before we face the loss of that service? Right now the crisis centre in Thompson is faced with having to shut down a lot of services it currently offers because of the lack of support from this Minister and this Government.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): I totally reject that there is a lack of services and interest

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by this Government in shelters. I think a 47 percent increase in funding to that particular area is definitely commitment.

Now with regard to the crisis lines, the Member should be aware that very soon the provincial crisis line is going to be put in place in Winnipeg to deal with the provincial, out-of-Winnipeg, shall we say, crisis. That will go a long way to helping the people of Manitoba.

Bill No. 3 Statistics

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): My question is for the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae)-(interjection)-

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 3 has been law in Manitoba for two weeks and is of great interest to Manitobans. Can the Minister advise the House how it is working?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the Honourable Member for his interest in the protection of Manitobans and I will attempt to give him a response respecting figures I have received from the City of Winnipeg police. I do not have figures for the whole province but those numbers will be coming in too.

We understand that in the City -(interjection)- of Winnipeg—it would be the first time—since November 1, when Bill No. 3 was proclaimed, there have been 63 apprehensions and licences suspended; 11 of those were suspended drivers and their vehicles were seized. Seventy-five vehicles have been seized under Bill No. 3; 11 of those were suspected impaired drivers and their licences were already suspended.

There have been five appeals of the vehicle impoundments. Two of those have been successful, and three have been denied. So 73 vehicles are being held in towing company compounds. The Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) asks about—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): This is important information, but I would suggest it would be more appropriately raised as a ministerial statement since the Minister obviously has had this statement prepared. I would ask that he not waste the important Question Period time, and raise this information as a ministerial statement, tomorrow perhaps.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. I would like to remind the Honourable Minister that answers to questions should be as brief as possible. The Honourable Minister of Justice to finish his answer.

Mr. McCrae: Of course, Mr. Speaker, my answers should be brief and to the point, and that is exactly what I was doing. I would remind the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) that very seldom in this Session have Members of the Government Caucus asked questions in this House. We do not think that we are being abusive at all.

Mr. McCrae: As I said, the Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) asked about Brandon. It might interest him to know that the first apprehension in the City of Brandon was also a suspended driver so that driver lost his licence and his car in the same occurrence.

Over this past weekend there were 32 impaired driving matters, and six were already suspended and had their vehicles seized. There were 19 suspended drivers and the legislation appears to be working well in protecting Winnipeggers and all Manitobans.

Ryan Sais Social Assistance

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): My question is to the Minister of Economic Security. Yesterday in this House I raised the unfortunate case of 12-year-old Ryan Sais, whose social allowance has been callously and unjustly cut off by this province. His mother has been told to tap the \$10,000 that was awarded to Ryan eight years ago for injuries sustained in an accident. This money is intended -(interjection)- to compensate Ryan—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rose: —for his injury when he turns 18, and not to pay for the food he eats, the clothes he wears, or the roof over his head. I first raised this issue with the Family Services Minister (Mrs. Oleson) on October 18, nearly a month ago, without any response.

Yesterday the Minister knew little about what I was talking about. So I would ask her again today, will she finally take action? Will she finally intervene on behalf of this child and restore the \$245 per month, plus drug, dental and other valuable benefits that Ryan Sais is entitled to under the Canada Assistance Plan?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): I took the opportunity yesterday to review this when the Member raised it, and I should tell the Member that the staff had acted in accordance with regulations that have been in place for some time. However, I have asked them to review this policy in light of this type of thing, because I do have great concern for this young boy, and I have asked staff to review this policy in light of the fact that it is a policy that has been there for some time, but it may have implications that we may have to look at. So I do assure the Member that we are looking at that.

Mr. Rose: That is great for the study, Mr. Speaker, but what is this Minister going to do for Ryan, who is desperate right now?

Social Assistance Regulation Amendments

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the same Minister. Ryan's mother is indicating that the loss of assistance to her son may indeed force her into a desperate situation to tap this \$10,000 fund prematurely and use the money for other than its intended purposes, as I stated earlier. In my view this province is blackmailing this family. Will this Minister pledge today to change the welfare regulation, which she knows is flawed, that allows her department to cut off assistance to a 12-year-old child because a court awards him a sum of money as compensation for a personal injury? Why has she so far seen fit to abide by this ludicrous regulation?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, if the Member was listening, I indicated in my previous answer that we are reviewing that and looking at the implications of changing that regulation.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, obviously Manitobans will know quite well, as will her colleagues, that is not good enough—study, study, study.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. I would like to remind the Honourable Member this is not a time for debate; this is Question Period.

Ryan Sais Social Assistance

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Vital, kindly put his question, please.

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): My question is to the same Minister. Mr. Speaker, a promise to look into the matter is cold comfort for this family. What they need is a Minister who is prepared to take action now to help. Why does this Minister choose to go along with this callous policy? Why is she prepared to let this family suffer by cutting off social assistance? Why is she forcing them to use funds for food, clothing and other necessities—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable Minister of Family Services.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again for the edification of the Member that I have undertaken to review this policy, in the light of what implications it may have, immediately, and see what we can do for this young fellow.

* (1410)

Parent-Child Centres Interim Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I have a question again on the Parent-Child Centres. As Members know, there is a crisis facing those centres

with the closing of Elgin, and the potential closing of Ellice and Strathcona. This time I would like to ask my question to the Minister of Education.

Will the Minister, on behalf of the hundreds of families and children in the inner city, on behalf of the over 3,500 single-parent families in the inner city, on behalf of the ethnocultural communities who depend on this service, on behalf of those who realize that this is the best program around in the inner city for mums and their children, convene a meeting with his own department, his colleague, the Minister of Family Services, her department officials, the school board officials, and the members of this very important community organization, will he call a meeting immediately and come up with an interim funding arrangement so that this tragedy does not have to happen?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, once again I have to tell the Member for St. Johns that certainly my department does not have the mandate to fund all types of organizations of this nature who do not have any connection with the school system in this province.

I have to indicate also that we have met with these Parent-Child Centres who are the street-based parent-child centres, and we have indicated to them that as the Department of Education we can only fund them through a program called the Compensatory Program, which they have to apply through their divisions. If they can approach their school divisions and their schools and get that school division or school to support them by applying for a compensatory grant, then we would look at that positively in a committee that is responsible for that and we will certainly consider that.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Given that the Minister of Education has told these groups to go to the school board to get some policy statement of support, and they are doing so this evening, can the Minister tell this House whether or not a positive policy statement from the school board will guarantee some immediate access to the Compensatory Education Support Fund, regardless of whether or not that centre is physically located in a school?

Mr. Derkach: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Johns is being somewhat foolish in the way that she poses the question, because she is indicating that any time there is a request made by anyone we should automatically fund it, regardless of the criteria that have to be met, as long as we just keep throwing money at situations. That is an irresponsible way to look at things. Certainly the Member for St. Johns should know better. Mr. Speaker, the only way that funding can be accommodated for those kinds of situations is within the mandate and the criteria that are set for compensatory funding. In fact that Parent-Child Centre meets those criteria then there would be a possibility to look at it in a positive way.

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Winnipeg Education Centre Capital Construction

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Johns, there is time for one very short question.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, to the same Minister with a new question. Given that the Core Area Initiative tomorrow will make a decision about reallocating the half a million dollars now slated for capital construction costs of the Winnipeg Education Centre, will the Minister give a commitment to this House and to the Manitoban people today that he is prepared and his Government is prepared to proceed with the capital construction of the new Winnipeg Education Centre, something which the Minister's own review supported, and will he—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put. Order. The Honourable Minister of Education.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Once again that question was asked a week ago. Had the Member been in the House, she would have listened to the answer at that point in time. I indicated to the House last week that in fact there is a study that is nearing completion with regard to the Winnipeg Education Centre, a study that has not been undertaken since the Winnipeg Education Centre was established, and was necessary.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to remind the Honourable Minister that the —(interjection)— Oh, the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcia-Leis), on a point of order.

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis: Yes, on a point of order. I believe that the Minister did not hear the question and realized I was asking him about the fact that Core Area, tomorrow, will make a decision about reallocating the half a million dollars slated for capital construction for Winnipeg—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. The Honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach).

Mr. Derkach: I would like to finish the answer to this question because it is an important issue, and in fact it would be pointless for us to go through the exercise of getting a study done and results of that study made known and still make a decision before those results are known. So, Mr. Speaker, we will wait for the results of that study and then we will make the decision with regard to the Winnipeg Education Centre.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, might I have leave to revert to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to revert back to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees? (Agreed)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the report of the committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

* (1420)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), 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 presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) in the Chair for the Department of Health; and the Honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Chornopyski) in the Chair for the Department of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—HEALTH

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gilleshammer): Order, please. I would like to call this section of the Committee of Supply to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health.

When the committee last sat the committee had been considering item 3. Community Health Services (a) Regional Services: (1) Salaries, \$26,434,600—the Member for Ellice.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Chairman, yesterday the Minister said he would have a sheet—a process written out for me in terms of responsibilities of the authority of regional directors in regard to job responsibilities of their supervisors within the region. Does the Minister have that information today?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): No, Mr. Chairman, the ADM is not here yet. I am hoping that he arrives when she arrives.

Ms. Gray: Yesterday, having had a chance to look at the schedule where Mr. Toews has been hired, it does

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indicate in his schedule that one of the elements he is to incorporate in the new regional structure is office management functions in each office location vested with a single position.

I am wondering if the Minister could explain what that phrase means, or that sentence.

Mr. Orchard: Maybe this is not going to be a complete enough answer, if it is not my honourable friend will pose another question, but basically the office management function in there is to co-ordinate and assure delivery of clerical work, et cetera, et cetera, scheduling of vacations to make sure that those are happening in a co-ordinated fashion throughout the region and would be a Clerk 5 level.

Ms. Gray: The Minister has then indicated that this office management function deals specifically with clerical/administrative staff as opposed to field staff.

Mr. Orchard: I think that is a reasonable conclusion.

Ms. Gray: Who then is responsible from the district offices to ensure that the office runs smoothly, i.e., that when someone walks through the door and wants to see a worker that in fact staff are available; that in fact, all the Mental Health staff and all the Public Health staff do not take vacation on the same day, et cetera, et cetera, day-to-day operations.

Mr. Orchard: That is one of the issues that is under discussion. We are pointing toward an appointment of one of the more senior people in that office to make sure those functions happen, in terms of client service and they are followed through on, and completion of task is somewhat more assured.

Ms. Gray: I can appreciate somewhat that the Minister does not have all the details of this reorganization but my question is, given what the Minister has just said that as an example they are looking at appointment of a senior person who may carry on some of those functions.

Will all those details be clarified before jobs and positions are bulletined so that in fact staff will know exactly the type of jobs that are available and what they may or may not be applying for?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, that is the ultimate goal and I hope we come within a high relative degree of percentage of achieving that in terms of establishing the job description for yet to be advertised positions.

Ms. Gray: It is good for the Minister to say you want to achieve that. Does the Minister however feel that in fact that particular component, i.e., clarifying those details is critical given that that very problem has caused and attributed to some of the grievances that are now on the books?

Mr. Orchard: That is why Government has taken a very deliberate and a slower than some would appreciate time to resolve this issue. Problem identification has been one aspect, discussion and

feedback has been another aspect, interdepartmental meetings has been another aspect and we finally concluded with the retention of Mr. Toews to give us the best advice on how to bring this whole issue to an equitable resolution. Again, the specifics of my honourable friend's question are certainly being considered and hopefully will be addressed.

* (1430)

My honourable friend has worked in the Civil Service and knows that the goals that are set sometimes are simply not met. That was certainly the case in this whole reorganization, certainly the case. We do not intend to create problems in the proposal we are developing.

I cannot give my honourable friend a job description where the responsibility for such and such a senior position at 1200 Portage Avenue will be to unlock the door at 7:53 in the morning and then lock the door at 6:02 in the evening. I cannot say that is going to be part of the job description. As tightly as possible, job responsibilities will be part of any advertising we do and certainly any description of job responsibilities to those individuals involved and working within the system.

Ms. Gray: I have a little trouble with the Minister's response because the example he gave of locking and unlocking the door sounds ludicrous to me. I have never seen that written in position descriptions, unless the Minister is looking at position descriptions that the rest of us do not have access to, and the only ones I could think of would be his Cabinet Ministers. I do not know which positions he would be referring to. That is not what I asked at all.

What I am saying is that in fact my question was: will there be clarification of the structure including whether in fact there is a senior person designated in the offices so that staff, when this reorganization occurs, will have the opportunity to know exactly what options they have open to them and what possibly they should be applying for, if in fact those jobs are bulletined? That is the question because if they do not know and do not have those opportunities, some people may move into positions and end up being in classifications either of a higher classification or a lower classification and they would have gone into those jobs with less than adequate information.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I believe I have answered in the affirmative to that question approximately a dozen times already. That is why I responded, at 7:53 the doors are unlocked because my honourable friend used the word in her last question as she used before, "exactly" was the word she used. Exactly means unlock the door at 7:53, reading her terminology of questioning, and I am telling you that is not going to be in the job description, but as close as is conceivable in designing job descriptions the duties, the responsibilities and the expectations will be laid out to those individuals who are either in the positions or will be applying for the positions. Now if that is not clear, my honourable friend can ask exactly what needs to be clarified and I will attempt exactly to do that.

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Ms. Gray: Well, the record will show how many times, if at all the Minister has answered the question. I would suggest that he might want to review position descriptions and get an orientation from the Civil Service Commission but there may be some problems in doing that as well.

With a further question to the Minister, he indicated yesterday that exit interviews were common practice and I was not sure if he was suggesting they were common practice in the northern regions or in fact if it was common practice across the province. Could he clarify?

Mr. Orchard: The question was fairly specific, if I recall the question from the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It was, have you determined why it is difficult to staff in Norman, in Thompson and in Parkland, to a lesser degree, but nevertheless different circumstance than in the rest of the province. When the question was asked specifically on those regions the answer was that we are attempting to determine that and we have undertaken exit interviews with those individuals leaving positions in those regions.

Ms. Gray: Have there been exit interviews conducted in the Winnipeg regions? I ask that because—are there any regions where in fact within a particular component, i.e., clerical, or public health, continuing care, has there been any notice of a high turnover of staff in the last two years?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed that is a regular occurrence throughout the regions.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate if there has been any pattern that has developed and I think in particular of clerical staff, thinking of certainly a number of staff changes? Has there been a noticeable pattern in terms of why staff are leaving any particular types of jobs?

Mr. Orchard: Not that staff has informed me.

Ms. Gray: The Minister has said that now there will be a movement back to one region. Will there, as well, be a movement back to a centralized recruitment and training service for the Continuing Care Program?

Mr. Orchard: Discussions are pointing us in that direction, but we have not finalized the mechanisms.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister tell us, does he have information today as to what the cost is of the various office buildings that his department is renting?

Mr. Orchard: I do not have that detail today, if my honourable friend wants some answers we will attempt to provide them. If she would provide office buildings by name we could attempt to provide them. If you have any specific buildings that you want information on, then please—

Ms. Gray: The specific building I am interested in, because I understand there may now be very few staff on the 5th floor, 352 Donald, I am wondering if in fact

there are any staff there if we are still paying rent on this building and what we are using it for.

Mr. Orchard: I am told we have some staff there but we are making the surplus space available to Government Services on an as needed basis.

Ms. Gray: Does the Minister know what we are paying for rental of that space?

Mr. Orchard: No, the Minister does not know, but he will try to find out for you. Maybe I can help my honourable friend. Apparently all of the space is purchased by Government Services and we do not contribute towards the cost of it.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate, in Estimates last year I raised a concern about ratio of clerical staff to professional. If I recall, I am not sure it was a concern by the Minister or his staff. Has there been any type of workload review or have there been any concerns expressed over the past year about the clerical component?

* (1440)

Mr. Orchard: Yes, and certain processes are in place right now. Decisions have not been finalized.

Ms. Gray: I notice under the staffing component for the regions that the number of SYs have not changed from last budget year and in fact I do not think it changed from the year before. Can the Minister indicate, have there been any increases or decreases in any programs in staff years for the regions?

Mr. Orchard: Are you talking all regions, Winnipeg regions?

Ms. Gray: All regions?

Mr. Orchard: All regions. I will answer the basic question. There has not been any change in the staff complement. There have been some changes within the mix. We have some gains and losses compared to—interchanges within Family Services which net out with us having the same complement. We have had one SY transferred from Resource Co-ordination or to Resource—how can you have two “froms”? I have got two “froms” for one person. I stand corrected, we have had a change of one-half staff year, down. It involves a transfer of three staff years from Family Services, two transferred to Family Services, one transferred to Mental Health Promotion, one transferred to Mental Health Rehabilitation, one transferred from Brandon Mental Health Centre, one transferred to Brandon Mental Health Centre, a half SY in that case. We have had three transfers over on the fitness group, of course as we discussed in Health Promotion, over to Industry, Trade and Technology.

Ms. Gray: The two SYs transferred to Mental Health, are those SYs with bodies attached or were they just vacant SYs?

Mr. Orchard: It did vary, sometimes with body, sometimes without body.

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Ms. Gray: The two positions I think the Minister mentioned, Mental Health Rehab and the Mental Health Promotion, with those particular SYs are those vacant positions that have been transferred?

Mr. Orchard: How be we discuss that when we get to Mental Health? The staff in Mental Health might be appropriately able to answer that.

Ms. Gray: If the regions had the positions and transferred them, surely they would know if the staff went with them.

Mr. Orchard: We will give you every detail we can. We have all the time in the world. The position transferred to Mental Health Promotion was a position with individual attached, Ivan Seunarine, the Mental Health Rehabilitation was a position which was vacant.

Ms. Gray: Does the Minister have information on staffing positions at the regional levels where there are SYs or term positions held by Health, but they may be being utilized for Family Services work? I ask that question because of the teams or the concept at the field level where we have Family Services positions in Health. Is the Minister aware if any of his positions which have been designated for Health are actually being used for some work in the Department of Family Services?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed that it crossed the system as two to three positions which, depending on need between Family Services and the Department of Health, may be used for short-term recruitment to fill a specific need.

Ms. Gray: Since there has not been any upward change or even downward change in the staffing complement of the regions over the last couple of years, I suppose we could assume that there is no need expressed by regions, et cetera, for any increase in staff, or that in fact the needs expressed and somewhere along the way that those positions get cut before it reaches Treasury Board. Could the Minister indicate, first of all, have there been any workload reviews done in any of the regional programs that he is responsible for in Health in regard to resources available to those programs at the field level?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, and one of them is, as I mentioned earlier on in a question, under clerical. There has been a workload review on clerical. Recommendations are being pursued, as my honourable friend can appreciate, some of these recommendations have staffing and financial implications in which there is a process of Government inclusive of Treasury Board and Estimates which have to be followed through on. A review in some regions is contemplated for both Continuing Care and Public Health. The Continuing Care one is in process.

Ms. Gray: Is the Continuing Care one workload review or is it caseload reviews?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed it is a workload review.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate, were there any requests for increases in staff in any of the various programs from the regions for this budget year?

Mr. Orchard: An easier question to answer would be, were there no requests for increase in staff, to which the answer would be no.

* (1450)

Ms. Gray: My question is, given the increased emphasis, at least on paper, of this Government towards health promotion, and disease prevention, given that as far as Government staff is concerned, the two professionals or programs that usually deal with that area are public health nurses and home economists, can the Minister explain why there has been no increase in any of these type of staff over the last number of years?

Mr. Orchard: Not that I want to be critical of my honourable friend in the tenure of this question because she can correct me if my assumption is wrong, but I detect from my honourable friend's question that she is reflecting her Civil Service employment where it becomes the mentality that the only people who can deliver health promotion messages are civil servants.

Therefore, if you are committed to health promotion you hire extra staff. Mr. Chairman, that is exactly the opposite to what we endeavoured to do in terms of the health promotion paper. We have not initiated a substantive effort to hire more civil servants to deliver health promotion messages. We have seconded, invited and participated in a partnership forum with many people in Manitoba who are already there in the various non-Government organizations, in the workplace and various organizations throughout the province, who are already there in delivering health promotion messages to Manitobans in their own right, be they the Heart Foundation, be they the Lung Association, Diabetic Association, et cetera, et cetera.

As a result of the announcement and a substantial amount of discussion with those non-Government organizations, those not-for-profit groups, those many thousands of volunteers in Manitoba, we now have upwards of 30 formal partnerships in process and formulation and active with various groups assisting and acting as partners in health promotion throughout Manitoba, with a modest budget using existing volunteer and already delivered programs enhanced with the assistance of health promotion in Government. Genuine partnership, not simply the creation of an image of health promotion because we have hired more staff, but real delivery at the community level by building upon the strengths of many organizations out there that have worked in isolation from each other and from Government by bringing them together in terms of the genuine partnership in Health Promotion, and we see that already showing signs of success and it is only the first step.

We think there is substantial opportunity to build on that good will, that desire in the community to deliver a Health Promotion message in partnership with Government. So that is why there has not been a substantial increase in Health Promotion staffing because we believe and we think we are on the right track and we think there is success in terms of the

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approach of inviting those already in the community to help us with Health Promotion.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, well, I have no problem with the partnership in a combination of Civil Service and community, but in the examples even that the Minister has given he refers to excellent organizations, Heart Foundation, Diabetics Association, but they all deal with specialized programs to specialized target groups.

What community organizations are out there that deal specifically with the areas of family nutrition and/or deals specifically with single parents on a low income in regard to their nutrition choices in the whole area of lifestyle for that particular target population? Who does that, who is responsible for that?

Mr. Orchard: Well, as we discussed for a substantial amount of time last week, that is an approach in which several areas of the Department of Health provide information. They provide that kind of information, that is what the "Towards Healthier Eating" message is in part targeted towards.

Now my honourable friend, if you want to rehash nutrition after we have passed the Estimates that is fine, but we dealt with the issue I thought in a rather complete and full manner last week. If my honourable friend wants to revisit, I have all the time in the world.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, I am not necessarily revisiting an issue, I mean I think the answer is clear by the non-answer from the Minister that in fact the whole area of single parents and actually doing the individual teaching with them providing what I would call "storefront opportunities" where you have a trust relationship with the community and you begin to work with these families. In fact that has always been a low priority of the past administration and continues to be a lower priority with this administration because staff have only so much time, and how much of that time is spent on individual health promotion activities and working with these families?

Again, we supposedly did not have the statistics in Maternal and Child Health, the amount of time is very low, but as the Minister is aware, he is correct, we could sit and debate the whole area of service delivery and nutrition and how you reach people in target populations for the next three days but we will not do that. A further question—

Mr. Orchard: Well, Mr. Chairman, you see my honourable friend was into this issue in Maternal and Child Health in which at that stage of the game I indicated that a substantial amount of counselling was provided one on one, exactly as my honourable friend has brought forward. Now those are single mothers, part of the counselling involves nutrition, how they ought to feed themselves in their pregnancy period, that is exactly the one-on-one counselling my honourable friend is talking about today which we discussed at substantial length I believe last week.

Now as I say, I have all the time in the world to talk this over with my honourable friend, the home

economist, who knows all of the answers even to questions that have not been asked, but you know there comes a time in committee when an answer is given and if does not happen to suit the fancy of my honourable friend, I mean we can keep on repeating the answer, repeating the answer, repeating the answer, I have all the time in the world.

Ms. Gray: Well, pregnancy is not the only time that we deal with nutrition in families and the Minister can talk about the questions and the answers in the preceding references that we have dealt with in Supplementary Estimates, but once you read through the answers you could probably condense it into about a paragraph because the actual information that the Minister has provided as opposed to rhetoric is very, very little. So whether the Minister does not have the information, chooses not to give the information, or does not have the interest in disease prevention and health promotion, I do not know the answer to that.

I will move on to another area though. I have one other area that I want—

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if my honourable friend might offer me, because this is one area she did not ask about, my honourable friend might recall the political fire storm that erupted about four years ago or thereabouts in terms of removal of the home economist within the Department of Health.

One of the functions of those home economists which we fought for -(interjection)- well, my honourable friend says that is not the issue and she has not even listened to the answer yet. Goodness gracious, I have to sit here and listen to your questions that could be summarized to one word.- (interjection)- Yes, let us summarize the questions.- (interjection)-

Mr. Chairman: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, part of the reason why in Opposition we believed the Government was making an ill-advised move in the home economists was because part of the work of the home economists was nutritional counselling to single parent families in the lower income bracket in the core area, City of Winnipeg. They provided advice on how you shop wisely and economically and how you budget in a household, and how you make a limited food dollar give you the greatest nutritional value. We had fought for the retention of that program and it still is serving that low income target group of primarily, not exclusively, core area single family poor, and poor in general. That is another initiative.

I realize my honourable friend did not ask that question, but when she is asking what is Government doing to meet the needs of these people, Government is undertaking a number of initiatives. Then when my honourable friend asks, well, you cannot be serious as Government about Health Promotion because you have not hired 1,500 civil servants to deliver a Health Promotion message, I say that is not what we are doing.

* (1500)

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I used the example, and then my honourable friend said, oh, well, that is not good enough, because that does not reach a target group of the lower income people, the single parent families, and I have just given her two examples where we meet with those people even one on one as we discussed last week.

I do not know how more definitive I can get in terms of program description for my honourable friend. If she is not satisfied with those answers, then carry on with the questions, I have all the time in the world.

Ms. Gray: If the home economists, and the Minister has brought this up dealing with low income families in the core area, I must dispute, in fact, we even have a certain proportion of our home economist staff working in the inner city as opposed to the suburbs. Perhaps the Minister could give us that breakdown?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I will provide that information to my honourable friend.

Ms. Gray: I would suggest that what may happen is in fact that you have less home economists working in the inner city per population as you do in the suburbs. Again I question the validity of the Minister's statements in regard to working with inner city groups.

The Minister—and I have admitted this before—talks about home economists in the Department of Health. He did not save staff positions in the Department of Health. He tried to save the directorate and I have said in the past on record, the Minister did a good lobby job, so did the home economists across the province do a good lobby job, but with the help of the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), the now Minister of Health, did do a good job of trying to salvage that particular home economics directorate. I have no qualms about saying that at all.

Mr. Orchard: 3:02 compliment. 3:02 p.m., Tuesday, November 14.

Ms. Gray: The clock is fast—and that is it for the year.

Mr. Orchard: A compliment from Avis Gray.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for Ellice.

Ms. Gray: No, I just have a question on the computerized system on home care. There have been some concerns expressed that there are computers in the district offices for resource co-ordinators and that in fact they are sitting idle, they are not being utilized, and my information could be not up-to-date. Can the Minister indicate if the computers that were designed, the programs for use by resource co-ordinators so they can do matching and assigning, is that program fully operational?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed that is part of the MSSP system which until we develop proper controls which is done and is being tested and implemented very shortly.

Ms. Gray: Well, if I recall, the program or system was being tested about two years ago. Have there been

some glitches and what has been the problem or the holdup with implementing this program?

Mr. Orchard: Apparently it was developed and ready to go last fall, but concerns were expressed and those concerns were investigated and the program was put on hold until those concerns were resolved. It is now presumably piloted in Eastman region and ready to go barring any unforeseen glitches in Eastman region.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Well, I do not want to be left out of the Minister's diary so I have searched diligently for a reason to compliment the Minister—

Mr. Orchard: Another compliment?

Mr. Storie: I have not found one yet.

Mr. Orchard: Well, strike him off the record.

Mr. Storie: But I assure you that I will continue to search and I am hoping that after I am finished my questions I will actually have a reason to compliment the Minister.

I would like to deal for a moment with the issue of northern primary health care. I know that the community of Sherridon, for example, was looking for the services of a public health nurse. I understand they currently have a community health worker but were looking to upgrade their services, and I am wondering if the Minister can indicate whether Sherridon might expect to be accommodated in the near future.

Mr. Orchard: That issue has been discussed at the departmental level and the regional level and there are no immediate plans to put a public health nursing position into Sherridon.

Mr. Storie: No compliment for the Minister.

Mr. Orchard: Okay.

Mr. Storie: Number 2, I am hoping that the Minister, the department and regional staff are reviewing the requirements in Sherridon and not only in terms of perhaps some arbitrary guidelines that deal with the number of community residents required before the department determines that it is appropriate to provide that kind of service but it is a fairly isolated community.

I am sure the department is incurring considerable cost in transporting people back and forth from that community under somewhat treacherous circumstances because the existing pioneer standard road that goes into the community is not always passable and certainly not capable of being of much use in emergency circumstances. So I hope the Minister will keep an open mind, and the department will keep an open mind in terms of providing that service.

I had some other questions about the possibility of establishing a breast screening device, a mammograph in the Flin Flon area. The Minister received a petition of some 1,100 residents of the Flin Flon area requesting some additional services. I think the rationale that they

used to make the request were quite thoughtful particularly acknowledging that Flin Flon is an aging community, that there are many, many elderly single women in the community and those numbers continue to grow. They seem to be an at-risk group.

I am wondering whether the Minister, first of all, can indicate whether the advisory committee on breast screening programs, whatever the title of that committee was, has reported as it was supposed to do in October, and if it is reported, what the results of that report might be.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, before I move into the mammography program, I do not want my honourable friend's comments to leave the impression that there are no community health services in Sherridon. There are community health workers there who have been there permanently and public health nurses who regularly visit. That circumstance has existed for a number of years. There has never been a permanent public health nurse at Sherridon, including the 1981-1988 period that my honourable friend was a Cabinet Minister and no doubt made that request to his Minister of Health across the Cabinet table, not across the Estimates table.

I do not want my honourable friend to leave the impression that we are treating the residents of Sherridon in a different manner or fashion. We are probably using the same sort of decision-making criterion for staffing that were used from the time when my honourable friend was a Cabinet Minister and have come to the conclusion that particularly with fluctuating populations as happens from time to time in a mining community that we find the services of the community health worker permanently in residence and of public health nurses in on a regular basis to be not an ideal circumstance. Obviously a community would even like to have a physician there, but certainly a reasonable position I think it is one that has been consistent for the last number of years.

* (1510)

Turning to the mammography program, my honourable friend might recall that we announced a mammography initiative in the throne speech debate and we have since that announcement struck a committee of fairly broad membership on mammography. They are in the final stages of developing a report which will provide best advice as to direction of Government and how we undertake a mammography screening program and how we implement that program throughout Manitoba. One of the things that I asked to be part of, it was a balanced opportunity for service delivery including rural and northern Manitoba. They are also developing for us what they think is a best estimate of the financial implications of such a program.

I have not received that report, it simply is not ready at this stage of the game. I am expecting that the concerns expressed by Flin Flon, which are not unique, they are concerns expressed by women across the province, outside of the City of Winnipeg, will be addressed in any proposed program that Government would undertake.

Mr. Storie: In reference to the Minister's comments about no significant change in terms that the primary health care as provided in Sherridon, I did not indicate that was the case. The community of Sherridon in 1987 and '88, the circumstances were substantially different. In fact, there was at that time an operating mine and 140 employees in the area and in fact plans were afoot, a facility was placed in the community for the purpose of housing a public health nurse. The community I think was expecting that those services would be available and of course circumstances have changed and I think everyone recognizes that, but they do need nonetheless I think the services of a community based public health nurse to deliver primary care. I simply made the case that there may be economic arguments that the department can make to facilitate that, to justify that, so I simply ask the Minister to continue to look at it. If he wants a compliment, then I would expect that he will be generous in his review of that matter.

I wanted to also comment on his suggestion that the circumstances in Flin Flon were not unique. I have reason to believe that perhaps they are unique, both in terms of the number of women who are above the age of perhaps 50; the percentage of elderly residents in the community; its isolation; the cost for Manitoba Health Services of providing this service when service is provided out of the community; and the cost to the individuals who have to transport themselves if the costs are not covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program. So I think that there are all kinds of reasons why this may be quite unique. Not trying to downplay the needs of other rural residents, or other northern residents, but there may be an argument for placing on a priority basis the needs of this community and this region.

The Minister indicated that he did not have the report. I contacted his staff who indicated that the report was on the Minister's desk.

Mr. Orchard: No, I have not received the report.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, if the Minister has not, the fact is that the report is certainly available.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect to my honourable friend, I have not received the report. It is not ready, I am informed, to be brought to me and I have not received the report. I cannot answer for my honourable friend who has contacted as he says "a staff" who says that the report is on my desk because that simply is not accurate. It is not on my desk. It is not ready to be put on my desk, and it is a coming out of the—my words are on the record. I hardly think my honourable friend would think that I would put myself in a position of saying a report was not ready that was sitting on my desk.

I am anxiously awaiting the mammography report so that we can get on with the job of preventative health care for women in Manitoba, something that has been advanced by a number of people for a number of years. The report is not ready and is not on my desk.

Mr. Storie: The Minister seems quite exercised that I would suggest that. I am simply reporting what his

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department has told me to be the case. Now whether the Minister has a faulty memory or perhaps the Minister does not check his desk regularly.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Minister on a point of order.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, now my honourable friend says: just saying what the department has told him. It started out with "a staff." Now it is the department, the Assistant Deputy Minister, who is in charge of the program is indicating the report will be ready shortly. It is not completed. Now surely my honourable friend is not going to indicate that some started out staff, now the department is right, and I am wrong when I am saying that I have not received the report. Where is my honourable friend coming from?

Mr. Chairman: A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Storie: The Minister is very obviously defensive about this. My concern is whether the Minister is genuinely concerned about moving in this area. He has said, well, it is an area of concern and not only in rural Manitoba but in other parts of the province, and he is right. My concern is that the report be acted upon as quickly as is possible. My concern is that the implementation of that report do justice to the needs of my constituents, the people in the Flin Flon area, as well as other parts of the province. If the departmental staff are indicating the report is ready in some form, then I would certainly want the Minister to be aware of that, to make himself aware of that, and to act as expeditiously as possible to develop a screening program for the Province of Manitoba. This is a very serious matter.

I guess if the Minister has not seen the report then I have to accept from him, his mouth, that he has not seen the report. I simply ask him: will he be releasing the results of that report after he has taken the time to familiarize himself with it? Will he release it? Is that going to be a public document, or is the department preparing to implement that without a further round of consultation?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend now said well there is a report that may be ready in part or in whole. I am simply saying that when the report reaches me, which it has not yet because it is not completed and ready, that it will be acted upon expeditiously. This Government did not make the commitment, first time ever a commitment has been made in mammography by any Government in the history of the Province of Manitoba, we are simply not interested in doing anything but pursuing it as a health initiative of the Province of Manitoba.

Let my honourable friend sleep well at night, Government will act expeditiously on the report. When

I have received the report and reviewed the report, the public nature of it will be determined. I cannot indicate to my honourable friend, without seeing a report, how it will be dispensed with. That decision will be made when I see the report.

* (1520)

Mr. Storie: I would assume that if the Minister knew his business, if the Minister had actually given this task force specific instructions, and he indicated in his previous monologue that he had given them specific instructions to deal with the whole question of implementation and asking for a balance in rural and northern Manitoba, but if he had actually structured the task force terms of reference in a logical way that he would be ready to implement as soon as he received the report. Now he is saying, well, he is giving himself leeway for inaction and what the people of the province want, what women want in particular, is action.

I would like to know whether the Minister is intending (a) to release the report when he has a copy of the report in his possession, a final and complete copy. Is he planning to release it, and (b) is there to be consultation prior to the implementation of whatever is recommended? Two simple questions.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend's specific question before was, will the report be made public? I indicated to my honourable friend I have not seen the report, therefore, I have not made a decision in that regard. My honourable friend transferred that into some conclusion in his mind that we were going to delay implementation. That is not correct, and I have indicated that to him on three different occasions.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, this would not be the first time this Government, or this Minister, has used the tactic of reviewing a review to delay implementing something. The Minister will forgive me if I attempt to get some commitment from him, in terms of what his intended course of action is, and what the prospects would be for individuals who might want to have some input before there is implementation.

The Minister cannot seem to answer those questions. That is fair enough. I guess people will have to guess about the motives of the Minister and the necessity of his particular course of action. Guessing is always of course subject to error, and the Minister will have to pay the price for that guessing as well. He certainly left the Opposition no choice but to guess what the intentions, are and that is not always the most successful.

I was asking the provincial gerontologist whether they had any figures, with respect to the predominance of seniors, elderly, in Flin Flon, in northern Manitoba. I am wondering if the Minister has had a chance to pull any of those figures together. Is there a simple source, an accessible source so we can—

Mr. Orchard: We are checking, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Storie: One of the other things that Community Health Services does is help to deliver enriched services,

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enriched seniors services, enriched housing and the whole range of additional services that are provided to seniors. I am wondering whether the Minister can indicate—it says support services to seniors I am only guessing that is in this—Mr. Chairperson, am I in the wrong line, what does support services to seniors mean in the context of Community Health Services.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we covered the support services for seniors yesterday in some detail.

Mr. Storie: You will have to forgive me, Mr. Chairperson, I was not in attendance at the discussions, and I am just wondering if the Minister can provide the committee with a list of the projects that are underway in the province and their location. There is a suspicion, certainly in northern Manitoba, and perhaps rural Manitoba as well, that the range of services that are available in some communities, and particularly in larger communities, simply is not available in northern Manitoba. That is primarily because of course there are not the same number of service groups; there are not the same number of volunteer organizations. Those organizations do not have the same depth as the organizations in southern Manitoba.

I am wondering if the Minister can give us that information, if we could have some idea of where those enriched services are available and where they are not.

Mr. Orchard: First of all, Mr. Chairman, let me tell my honourable friend that support services for seniors, although we have already passed the item, I am quite willing to give my honourable friend some information.

Support Services for Seniors is a program whereby Government approves volunteer—basically the financial assistance for a community organization, or group, or community resource council to hire a volunteer co-ordinator. From thence the community themselves determine what range of additional services will be provided, based on the uniqueness of the community, its specific needs, the demographics of its population, lack in terms of commercially available services, et cetera.

If my honourable friend is identifying some areas in his constituency wherein he believes there is an inadequate provision of services, my honourable friend ought to approach the community leaders in that community, and indicate to them that should they put a proposal together and approach Support Services for Seniors that they may well qualify for financial assistance for the hiring of a volunteer co-ordinator, and the volunteer co-ordinator can then make efforts with the community to provide for instance, Meals on Wheels, friendly visiting, telephone visiting, drive to shop, volunteer driving programs, not-for-profit yard cleaning services, not-for-profit home repair services, not-for-profit home cleaning services, a whole range and plethora of services, which the community themselves can implement using volunteers or not-for-profit services. It is entirely at the behest, Mr. Chairman, of the community. I would answer my honourable friend's specific question, there are a number of organizations who are currently funded under Support Services for Seniors.

The Ashdale Holdings Inc. in Ashern is one; the Gimli Seniors Resources Council Incorporated is another; the Bethel Mennonite Care Services Incorporated in Winnipeg is the third; the Brandon Housing Authority Incorporated is another; the Chalet Maloin Inc. in St. Malo is another; the Roblin Community Help Centre is yet another; the Dauphin & District Community Resource Council is another; the Ethelbert Support Services to Seniors Inc. is in existence; the Fisher Branch Medical Facilities Incorporated is another; the Foxwarren Leisure Centre Incorporated is supported by Support Services for Seniors; the Foyer Vincent Inc. in Winnipeg is another; the Franklin Manor Incorporated in Dominion City is another one; the Gateway Manor Inc. in Teulon is another; Gladstone Area Senior Support Program Incorporated is another—

Mr. Chairman: On a point of order, the Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we have limited time here to ask the Minister questions. I had asked whether the Minister could provide us with that and I appreciate the Minister's co-operative spirit in terms of reading into the record all the 56 different projects.

My question though for the Minister's edification was, could he tell me whether there was any northern project? If there were could we have those provided in a list to us as well.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please. The Member does not have a point of order. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Orchard: Well, because this list was distributed and his colleague sitting next to him has it I thought I might help out with the communication in the NDP Caucus and read it out to him since his colleague did not share with him information that was given to this committee yesterday.

Now let me take the time and I will find out whether there are any in northern Manitoba. I will provide that information to my honourable friend if I can find it. Is Swan River close enough? Swan River Senior Citizen Centre Incorporated. No, that will not do. There surely must be one.

An Honourable Member: The northern Parkland. Why do you not just give him a list?

Mr. Orchard: I already have tabled the list and I am reading it for my honourable friend. I want to tell you that in the list that I have here now there are none from my honourable friend's constituency and there is absolutely no reason that I can conceive of that Flin Flon as a community-spirited town would not want to apply to Support Services for Seniors. I would give my honourable friend my personal obligation that if such an application were to come in that I would have the Support Services for Seniors staff expedite the approval

of that so that Flin Flon can get on with providing a wide range of services to their seniors in their community.

* (1530)

Mr. Storie: Well I appreciate the Minister's undertaking, it is most gracious. My point in asking, however, was not—

Ms. Gray: There is your compliment.

Mr. Orchard: Oh, what time is it? Three-thirty. That is two in a day.

Mr. Storie: However, my point in asking was not specifically related to Flin Flon. The Minister missed the reference to the fact that in many northern communities, including areas where there are senior citizens housing, for example, Wabowden, Norway House, there are no service groups. There is no Kiwanis Club, there is no Rotary Club, there is no Lions Club. There are very few volunteer organizations. The fact of the matter is that these communities have a more difficult time in formulating responses to these kinds of initiatives. The Minister, I guess, may be rightly proud of the fact that there are so many projects across Manitoba developing the partnership in health, whatever.

The fact of the matter is that it may need a different approach in some other communities and Flin Flon certainly is not the most underserved area when it comes to seniors services. There are many other smaller communities that simply will not or do not have the resources to access this kind of programming.

I am wondering whether the Minister is prepared to offer some support for those communities that do not have a volunteer sector in the community. Is that possible?

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend talks about Kiwanis and Lions et cetera, et cetera. I just want to tell my honourable friend that the vast majority of these support services for seniors programs are not involved directly with a service club. They are a group of individuals, community-minded, community-spirited individuals who have got together.

I want to share with my honourable friend one that I think is a very, very interesting one. It is the Hamiota Seniors Council Incorporated and there is one other community. I will get the second one for my honourable friend.

The Hamiota Seniors Council Incorporated is a group of seniors themselves who have said we have an obligation to our community in Hamiota. This community has given us our opportunity for livelihood, a lifestyle, an enjoyable environment to raise our families, a tremendous community, and we participated in the benefits of that community. Therefore, upon retirement we believe we have a contribution that we should continue to make to the Community of Hamiota and the surrounding district.

As a result, a group of community-minded, community-spirited seniors got together and formed

the Hamiota Seniors Council Incorporated, and they undertook with a co-operative effort, a partnership with Government, to achieve funding through support services for seniors so they can offer as a group of seniors, working with other seniors in their community, a range of programs that Government does not provide. That is seniors helping seniors.

As a matter of fact, there is a conference ongoing in Brandon, Manitoba, right now, seniors helping seniors, just exactly the kind of community spirit that my honourable friend the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) so desires to exemplify in his constituency and in communities of northern Manitoba.

I want to tell my honourable friend I am here and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) is here to participate with those community-minded individuals in northern Manitoba in my honourable friend's constituency. We will help and assist them with a formulation of their project to access funding for them for programs that they, on a volunteer basis, want to create as about 117 other communities in the Province of Manitoba have done, in a desire to build upon community strengths for seniors to help seniors and for community-spirited, community-minded individuals to have a vehicle and a forum to make services more readily available to those seniors in their communities that they want to say, enjoy your retirement in our communities and here is how we are going to help you. We are prepared to join and form a partnership with the communities in my honourable friend's constituency.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the Minister's rhetoric—

Mr. Orchard: Rhetoric?

Mr. Storie: The fact is the Minister does not understand the nature of the communities that we are talking about. It is quite obvious by his comments that we are not talking about the retired Royal Bank manager and the retired -(interjection)- whatever. In most of these communities they have very few professional people retire in their communities. Obviously by the fact that this program has been ongoing for a number of years—

Mr. Orchard: What a slap in Hamiota's face. What a silly person.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, I did not reference any community, for the Minister's information, but my point that I am making is that these communities are substantially different in their makeups than many of the communities that are referenced in this list and in what these communities need by virtue of the fact that there are out of 117 northern communities. If that does not tell the Minister something, he is being dense.

The fact is that what I am asking for is, is the Minister prepared to provide some support for these communities in terms of developing and understanding what the programs are, developing and understanding what might be available, and working with the communities, not reacting to something the communities request. The need is still there whether the communities have requested it or not.

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Is the Minister extending his invitation now for departmental staff to get involved in this search for a better life in these northern communities? Is that what he is offering? If that is what he is offering, it is something different than he said in the first instance. Is that what he is offering?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, you know my honourable friend has sat around the Cabinet table where the support services for seniors program was approved in terms of its approach. It was an initiative brought forward I believe primarily by Betty Havens, the chief provincial gerontologist. It was an initiative that understood the needs in the communities. It was approved, and my honourable friend says I agree. It was approved by a Cabinet that he sat around.

My honourable friend, I just want to tell him that nothing has changed in the Government's approach. The guidelines are the same as what he approved back in 1985. My honourable friend says that I am dense in that I do not understand the needs of northern Manitoba. Where in the world was this brainchild of the North, the Member for Flin Flon, when it was approved and he left out criteria that would apply to northern Manitoba. You want to talk about dense, I consider that ignorant.

Mr. Storie: What the Minister does not appreciate is that in fact there was very little seniors housing in most of remote northern Manitoba until the previous Government got involved. Yes, the Government introduced the support to seniors program, and yes, there have been some successes.

The question now becomes, does the Minister have the will or the ability to change the guidelines to reflect the fact that to this point there have been very few northern projects approved? Does the Minister have the will to improve the program? That is all we are asking. I am not placing the blame, I was not being critical of the Minister for not changing criteria. I simply asked, is he prepared at this point to acknowledge the fact that the criteria are not working in northern Manitoba, that it is time to do something different to make it work. If the Minister has to use the offices of the community health regional offices or his own departmental staff, is he prepared to do that? That was the question.

Mr. Orchard: I am not only prepared to do that, we are already doing it. We are working with groups in Thompson, we are working with groups in Flin Flon, we are working with groups in Lynn Lake, we are working with groups in Cranberry, we have two proposals in The Pas, all of which we think with the guidance of our Government and the wonderful efforts of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) will come to fruition. I think that is a pretty significant change in mentality since May 9 where communities in northern Manitoba are all of a sudden receiving recognition from this Government.

Mr. Storie: The Minister cannot have it both ways. He just says he did nothing to change the guidelines, that they were exactly the same. He cannot go ahead and

take credit. I am glad to see that there are some proposals on the table.

* (1540)

If the Minister would listen for a minute, if the Minister would acknowledge that Flin Flon—I said I did not think Flin Flon and The Pas were the most underserved. The fact is that there is good accommodation for seniors, there are seniors projects there and most of the communities he mentioned, more than one. My question was more directed to Wabowden and Norway House and the smaller communities where there are also seniors residents, where there are increasing numbers of seniors and whether they could access some of the benefits.

The Minister tells us there are proposals. It is disappointing that the Minister has not been able to approve any of those points, but I am assuming that will come, even with the guidelines that we established. The Minister is trying to take credit on the one hand and say things are impossible on the other because of what the previous Government did or did not do. My question is, is the Minister going to be working providing staff to support the needs of those smaller communities in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, let my honourable friend understand. Certainly, the guidelines have remained the same. The policy has remained the same. There is now pro-active work with the communities that I have mentioned to guide them in their establishment of Support Services for seniors programs. That initiative is available to any community in Manitoba.

Is my honourable friend suggesting that Government has to lead community initiative if the need is there and the community recognizes it and my honourable friend, the MLA for the area, is aware of the programs? Why would my honourable friend as an MLA not inform the communities as to the wonderful benefits that are there for them if they approach Support Services for seniors?

I want to tell you that what I did from time to time, and maybe this is a different philosophy of being an MLA than my honourable friend holds. As an MLA, I would be approached by or give suggestions to community groups on how they could access Government programs, what was available, and how they go through. I would put those groups in contact with the appropriate personnel and whatever appropriate department. I would be the facilitator between need in a community and availability of Government programs.

My honourable friend seems to be suggesting that the MLA in his area is not adequate to do that and Government must do it for him. Well, he just said no, he was not, that he is adequate. Get on with the job. Inform your communities, let them know it is there. It has been there for five years and the MLA has not let his communities know. Surely my honourable friend is not saying Government is at fault when the MLA has not communicated with his own residents.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, the fact of the matter is that most of those communities do not have—the

Minister does not understand the nature of those communities. Is the Minister saying that as an MLA, I can call for the support of the Department of Health staff to attend meetings in those communities, that they will undertake, show some initiative, when it comes to assisting in the preparation of plans and proposals in those communities? If he is then that is a new service and we are glad to have it.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I am shocked and dismayed that the MLA for Flin Flon who sat around Cabinet would not know that staff of all departments are available to explain community programs on request by the communities. That is a dismaying piece of information that my honourable friend has put on the record. Of course this Government is willing to work with communities and have staff fully available to explain programs that they may be able to become part of.

My honourable friend, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), was completely unaware that was a role of Government. I am shocked to hear that after eight years as an MLA he is finally learning that.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, I do not want to get into the debate between the two Members here. I think the point though, of the Member for Flin Flon, is that there are communities in which the organizational base does not exist to the extent it does in other communities.

In my own constituency, for example, I work very closely with local seniors and with the Rotary Club in terms of the proposals going back the last several years for a seniors drop-in centre and for a seniors facility. I would indicate to the Minister that there will be further applications from local seniors now that the seniors residence is scheduled to open. The seniors drop-in facility, in fact, is scheduled to open in December.

I do not think that is really the point. I think the point of the Member for Flin Flon was that there are communities where there is not the organizational base. I know in the case of Thompson, for example, the role of the Rotary Club and the work of the seniors themselves was absolutely critical. I remember when we first raised the whole question of the need for a seniors facility, a drop-in facility and a housing facility in Thompson several years ago, quite frankly, there was skepticism from departmental officials.

The programs existed, they were explained to people but there was skepticism. People said, well, Thompson is a relatively young community, there are not the number of seniors to justify a seniors facility and we proved them wrong. I can tell you how we proved them wrong.

In my constituency seniors went door to door to talk to people and provided a tremendous amount of information to the provincial Government at the time. The Rotary Club, provided the organizational resources. It was really the combination of the two that made the difference and I was very pleased when the Community Places funding was made available in 1987 and also when the housing units were approved in 1988 for the facility. It was a true community effort.

I do not want to get into the politics of it. I think it is a community effort. I am only raising that to indicate

that I think the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) had a point in terms of the situation in other communities because without the work of the seniors in Thompson and without the work of the Rotary Club we may still have been discussing rather than acting upon the need for a drop-in facility and a housing facility.

Incidentally, in case the Minister is not aware, the facility is full right now in terms of applications. That I think is something also that speaks to the foresight of the people who four years ago, and for many years have been talking about the need for a seniors facility. I remember raising it during Estimates in terms of various different departments where the funding would be available. I would say that it is a good case example. I think the Minister will find that there will be applications coming in from Thompson following that. I think that is the direct result of the fact the organizational base is there and I think even the fact of having the facility is going to bring people together.

I think you are going to find our seniors group in Thompson very active. I hope that in the next few years, when we also have that list of programs and grants being offered, to see the seniors from my constituency on that list and I can tell you that they will be. I also hope, as the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) did, that there will be further improvement in other communities. I would include Wabowden in that. I know Wabowden's situation very well. There is a seniors facility, but as the Member for Flin Flon pointed out, it is fine to point to Government programs and point to the assistance of the departments of Government being available and that is the case, but if the organizational base is not available, then the process goes nowhere.

It is a very similar debate we have seen in Community Places where the Government on coming into office immediately moved and required 50 percent funding from remote communities for badly needed community projects. I raise that because in the case of Thompson that was not a difficulty. In the case of the seniors facility, for example, because of the support of the community in the particular organization of the Rotary Club, the 50 percent funding was available. In communities, such as Wabowden and other remote communities, that may be needing facilities, whether it be Community Places facilities or other programming initiatives, that organizational funding base is not available. That I think was the very important point that the Member for Flin Flon raised and it is not a question of this exchange back and forth about who was doing what as an MLA, providing information or whether the assistance of Government is available, I think we have seen and the experience we have learned. I have certainly seen this as a Member of the Legislature, is that sometimes you can make a serious mistake in treating everybody equally when circumstances are not equal.

If you assume in your programs that there is an organizational and a resource base in a community, and that organizational and a resource base is not available, that can leave the community essentially shut out in the cold. It is not that they do not need the service, it is because they do not have the resources, and they do not have the organizational base to vocalize in that sense.

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I know, I am sure the Minister would have been the first one a number of years ago, the then Minister when I raised the need for seniors housing to say, well, where is the application, where is the interest from seniors, where is the support from the service club? That question was raised by the department, and it was not until that was available that the call in the community, the desire in the community, was translated from a generally accepted need into action.

* (1550)

I would like to ask the Minister, just so we can perhaps move on to a couple of other areas in this particular section, if those communities are not forthcoming, some of the more isolated communities, whether he would I think in more of the spirit of what the Member for Flin Flon was talking about and what I think that he even was saying to a certain extent, be willing to look at the criteria that exists for such programs, to look at the possibility of perhaps developing a separate criteria for isolated northern communities, so that perhaps in the future we will have a list of somewhat more than the current 50 odd organizations that will include some from northern communities.

I would like to ask perhaps to move on in other areas. That is my final question in this area.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I will give anything my honourable friend suggests due and necessary consideration. I want to tell him that I certainly am pleased that he, as the MLA for Thompson, able to at least attempt to clarify what the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) was attempting to say about northern communities. I appreciate his attempt at clarification of the Member for Flin Flon's attempt at clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: I did ask a question.

Mr. Orchard: What was the question again? I am sorry.

Mr. Ashton: This is almost a replay of Question Period the other week. I was just asking whether the department would—apart from that exchange, I tried not to get into that as much as possible, I believe that is between the Member for Flin Flon and the Minister of Health and that was in terms of the remote northern communities—to perhaps review the criteria.

With the Minister for Cultural Affairs (Mrs. Mitchelson) here, I would point to what happened in the case of the decision to move to 100 percent funding in remote northern communities on Community Places. That was not always the policy, by the way. It was decided to move to that policy under the previous Government because it became apparent that having the same criteria in each area of the province led to a lesser number of applications in comparison to need in northern communities.

In that same spirit, I am asking if the Minister would be willing to look at the criteria as it relates to northern communities. Perhaps he could consult with the NACC,

with the MMF, the various tribal councils, the MKO, the various northern organizations to determine whether the criteria actually are going to meet the needs in those communities.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, bear in mind that this is not a funded program. This Support Services for seniors provides some assistance in terms of retaining a volunteer co-ordinator and instead of having an unpaid volunteer co-ordinator who has to experience as indicated to us, burns out under the workload and opts out of that kind of community service, that the Support Services for seniors provide some assistance toward the salary component of a volunteer co-ordinator primarily.

It is up to the community thereafter to develop through primarily volunteer efforts within the community, in other words not for pay, a range of services that they will provide to seniors in their communities. There is no 50 percent guideline for funding as my honourable friend referred to.—(interjection)—Well, we are not talking about Community Places, we are talking I think about Support Services for seniors.

The analogy of Community Places is simply not an appropriate one because there is no percentage of funding in Support Services for seniors. Let me give you an example. The Franklin Manor Incorporated, Dominion City, is requesting a \$6,400 grant this year. On the higher end of the range is an organization like the Portage Housing Authority which will receive this year \$36,200.00. Those are to fund volunteer co-ordinators in the community based on several criteria, i.e., the size of the community to be served, the number of projects to be undertaken, the size of the absolute numbers or actual numbers of volunteers to be co-ordinated, so that each community varies significantly in the amount of resource that can be given to, or provided to, as an individual community. There are no set guidelines.

Let me give you another example. Two Winnipeg projects, for instance, the Winnipeg Regional Housing Authority Incorporated in terms of their tenant resource program is accessing this year \$78,400.00. As well, Winnipeg Regional Housing Authority Incorporated, for their meals program, is accessing this year \$114,000.00.

My honourable friend can appreciate we would not, in all likelihood, provide that level of support to Wabowden, because I think my honourable friend would recognize that the Winnipeg Regional Housing Authority Incorporated, in terms of the number of people they serve with their meals program, would be probably a multiple of the entire population of Wabowden. It would hardly be an expectation that we would provide \$114,000 to Wabowden. It is very much a negotiated situation with each community and there is an opportunity for every community, from large to small, to participate in this program, and we welcome that participation.

Ms. Gray: The Minister said that he had some information for me, and he was waiting for his ADM to arrive.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, now I forget who asked the question but it was in terms of the Extended

Treatment Bed Review, which was one question yesterday. They wanted to know if anybody from the seniors groups were on it. We have Ron Birt as the chair, Eleanor Giffin from Portage la Prairie is a member. Dr. Paul Henteleff who is a geriatrician is on it; Mr. Colin Lount; Mrs. Joyce MacFarlane; Miss Evelyn Shapiro, who is the previous home care director. That is not right. She is with the University of Manitoba, she is not a home care director. We have a little glitch in the information here that is pencilled in (interjection)-she used to be, oh. Previously, yes. That is what it said here, so there was not a glitch in the information then, and Mrs. Edith Swanhill, who is a previous home care co-ordinator, as well. Now I have other answers or do you want to ask questions on this answer?

A question was posed: who represents continuing care of the Winnipeg Region Implementation Review Committee, the Toews group? It is Cathy Lussier, Regional Continuing Care Co-ordinator, Winnipeg South Region, phone no. 945-5558. I do not have the home address.

The other question was how would a job be changed by the regional director? I will provide this information. Regional directors, as management, have a responsibility to ensure that the organization is current and that it is in keeping with the goals and objectives of the department. This means that from time to time departmental activities, program and priorities, will change and job responsibilities will be adjusted to reflect organizational needs. Changes may be made because an individual's job has changed through automation, et cetera or as a result of organizational change.

Regional directors are responsible for ensuring that the operation is relevant. They are authorized to adjust activities of staff as they relate to job responsibilities. If responsibilities are changed significantly, the new position description is submitted for auditing to human resource management. The classification review can be initiated by the employee or by management. Through the audit and review process, the job description is evaluated to identify specific changes and compared with similar positions within the department to ensure internal consistency. Human resource management will prepare a review report including recommendations and submit this to the Civil Service Commission for their review and decision.

Ms. Gray: The Minister then is indicating that if a regional director wants to basically take away functions from a particular person, some job functions, and give it to another person that ultimately affects their classification. There is really nothing stopping that regional director from doing that arbitrarily.

Mr. Orchard: I do not know whether my honourable friend's tenor of her question is accurate. My honourable friend is seeming to connote a malicious intent in such a move by a regional director, and I do not think that is what she intended.

Ms. Gray: What the tenor of my question was, given how you have explained the process, in fact to me there is not an accountability procedure built in whereby you

would, as the Minister has suggested, not have regional directors who may decide to use that particular authority, which sounds extensive to me, and in fact move their friends or people who they favour, have them take on more job responsibilities. What I am asking is: what is built in to ensure that does not happen, should that possibly happen?

Mr. Orchard: Well, I think that was implicit in the answer. If responsibilities are changed significantly, the new position description is submitted for auditing to the human resource management of the Department of Health. If the classification review can be initiated by the employee or by management, in that, Human Resources will prepare a review report including recommendations and submit this to the Civil Service Commission for their review and decision.

So there are checks and balances all throughout. If a staff believes, as my honourable friend hypothesizes, that they are being unduly and dastardly treated by some cruel and heartless regional director, they have a check and balance process in the procedure to human resources of the department and thereafter to the Civil Service Commissioner.

Ms. Gray: Well, the Human Resources and then the Civil Service will classify the position, and they do not necessarily look at how the decisions were made, in terms of who took on what job responsibilities and why, correct?

Mr. Orchard: I am sorry, I missed the first part of that question.

Ms. Gray: The Minister is saying that the Human Resources Department and the Civil Service Commission will look at the classification of that particular position, but they do not necessarily have the responsibility or do not necessarily look at the reasons why, or the decisions surrounding why, certain job functions were given to some individuals and taken away from others, correct?

* (1600)

Mr. Orchard: If there are new duties assigned and taken away from one employee, given to another, that is part of the questions asked by Human Resources. Why from this to this? Very much so, that is part of the discussion.

Ms. Gray: Just to clarify for the Minister; if that in fact was not asked or addressed, would the Minister then say in fact something was very wrong in Human Resources or the Civil Service Commission?

Mr. Orchard: I sense from that question that my honourable friend is saying that four years ago that might have happened, and I cannot answer that.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Orchard: I have a couple more questions that were asked the other day, if I could beg the indulgence of my honourable friend from Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

I was asked to provide a position description for the executive director of operations and the assistant to the executive director. How about if I just give my honourable friend this, because I would not want to take up committee time by reading seven pages of intensive reading. My honourable friends might say I was trying to waffle Estimates and I would not want that accusation to be levelled.

How many speech pathologists in Winnipeg versus rural? Okay, this is total, the best estimate school division outside funded agencies, et cetera, et cetera, including such organizations as St. Amant Centre, which of course is not funded by this department. We have, for all intents and purposes, 91 effective full-time positions in speech pathology in the City of Winnipeg and we have, inclusive of the school divisions and the Department of Health and Community Services, a total of 46 in rural Manitoba.

Primarily, I simply caution my honourable friends, in the school divisions, the vast majority being in the school divisions. The position descriptions for the medical officers of health, their duties and qualifications, this can vary, region by region. I am going to have to have this summarized for my honourable friends. Or I will tell you what we will do, we will go one better, we will not summarize it, we will give it to you. This is open Government epitomized. Well, some of you are pretty open, like you leaving work past ten o'clock.

Here is a medical officer of health for Westman region to give you an idea of how they fit into the system. Now are there any other questions?

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, can the Minister of Health tell us, he just read the names from the Health Advisory Network, if there is any senior from a consumer group on the Health Advisory Network out of those names?

Mr. Orchard: On the Health Advisory Network, yes.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, can he tell me if there is a person on the Extended Treatment Bed Review?

Mr. Orchard: You know I am at a loss to tell you whether there are any seniors there because I do not know the age of these people. I know that one individual is a retired individual.

Mr. Ashton: I have asked or given some indication yesterday, I just wanted to ask some questions on the medical officer of health. I would like to ask the Minister how many vacancies there are currently in terms of the regional medical officers of health?

Mr. Orchard: As of November 1989, there are three positions vacant. One is in active recruitment; one position is held for Winnipeg region to be filled with the new regional director recruited, that is the position we are going to use; and one is in joint recruitment with the University of Manitoba to attract an epidemiologist.

Mr. Ashton: What is the number of days coverage in the rural regions? If I recall correctly the North, for

example, I know the coverage is tentatively in the week or two weeks per month. I was wondering if the Minister could provide that information.

Mr. Orchard: In the Central region the coverage is up to four days per week, 16 days a month; the Interlake is a vacant MOH; Eastman's position is filled three days per week; the Westman region, the position is filled three days per week; Parkland, the coverage is up to eight days per month; Norman and Thompson both have coverage seven days per month.

Mr. Ashton: What is the reason for the variance? Is that just in terms of the availability of a medical officer of health aid if these positions were more readily fillable? I realize that is a difficulty, given the shortage of people with experience in community health. What is the target number of days that would be covered in those various different regions?

Mr. Orchard: What was the last part of the question? The number of days?

Mr. Ashton: The number of days that would be covered. I know that the number of days that would be covered, as I understand it, in most regions is dependent on the number of or the availability of a physician with that kind of experience, and it has more to do with his or her individual schedule than the needs in that community. I was just wondering what the target is. Obviously in Norman and Thompson, Parkland, we are dealing with as few as a week or eight days per month. What is the target number of days, or is there no target?

Mr. Orchard: The ideal would be to have say a couple in Winnipeg where we currently have one full-time position, say one full time in a region the size of Westman where we have roughly 100,000 people and we are currently at three days per week, or .6, if you will. For the balance of the region, probably in the vicinity of that .6 would be considered adequate.

* (1610)

The reason we have not got that kind of achievement of medical officer of Health Services is the inability to recruit to that position. We have been, ever since I have come in, because this problem is not a new one, this has plagued—I think my Assistant Deputy Minister has served as the Chief Medical Officer for four years now as well as her duties as ADM. We are continuing to pursue opportunities to recruit physicians trained to fill the medical officer of Health. Also, we are working with the University of Manitoba to set up a training program for general practitioners to enhance their skills in public health so that will help us in terms of recruitment.

Currently we have three doctors in the Career Residency Program in community medicine. There will be a return for service this fiscal year, two on a part-time and I believe the other one on a full-time basis, so we have got some partial resolution to the problem in the works right now through the Career Residency Program.

Mr. Ashton: The reason I raise the issue is at the time we are talking about Preventive Health, Health

Promotion, a broad range of health services, I think this position is a key one. I know from direct experience in my own region the excellent job that Dr. Redekop did a number of years ago had a very major interest in this area and I believe was working two weeks a month at that time in terms of his position as medical officer of Health in the Thompson region. From my direct experience with what was happening, I saw the impact of that, in fact I mentioned in a previous committee the Adolescent Health Centre, that was very much to do with the work done by Dr. Redekop who was then the medical officer of Health.

I am concerned about the coverage in many of the regions. I do not think it is strictly a question of population. I think the other factor that surely needs to be looked at is the distribution of population. If we are dealing with a whole series of smaller communities, then obviously in the North, for example, you need more staff time to be able to even just travel into the various communities to get an idea what is happening. I think it also is dependent on the health needs in those communities.

In terms of northern Manitoba, in particular, I think there is a tremendous need for community-based Medicine Preventative Health, Health Promotion. I think that is an area that really needs to be targeted. I am concerned about the lack of coverage, the vacant position in the Interlake, the figures the Minister gave indicate that in other areas it is as little as a week per month that is being provided in terms of medical officer of Health services into those regions.

I am not blaming the Minister, it has obviously been a supply problem. I accept the Minister's assurance that there are some positive signs that are taking place, but I would want to identify for the Minister the need to not only recruit to seek vacancies, but I would suggest in the case of some of the regions or at least coin the figures the Minister gave, underserved in terms of medical officer of Health time in those communities, that there be an effort to recruit and also expand the number of days coverage because I really do not feel that a week or eight days is sufficient per month to be able to deal with all the various different health needs.

I point, for example, in my own area to the ongoing discussions now in terms of need for a community-based clinic, the need for a personal care home, the need for a regional integration of health services, the need for integration between the regional services and also traditional hospital care operated under MHSC funding. Those are pretty big issues, I think they need the active attention of a medical officer of Health. I am not saying that is unique to that region, I know that there are similar questions in other health-related issues across the province.

(Mr. Darren Praznik, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

So I would ask the Minister if he would raise this with the department, not only to recruit to fill vacancies but to seek to up the number of days coverage in those underserved areas. I think that there may be some prospects if the supply situation is improving to be able to do that. There may be in some areas medical officers of Health who have undertaken the position out of a

sense of service who are not able to give the full commitment in time—I know that has been the case in the past—who would be more than happy to be able to have another physician fill in as a medical officer of Health, but once again I do not think the initiative should be theirs to deal with that. I think the department should be actively seeking to up the number of days coverage.

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend has made valued comments because in many ways we are attempting to move in the direction that he is suggesting, particularly with the Community Medicine Program, because that is where most of our potential recruits for medical officers of Health will be. That is the training program that they will be involved with and we have some current residency initiatives that appear to be giving us some opportunity for recruitment.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): The Member for Thompson. Further questions? Item 3.(a)(1)—pass.

The next item 3.(a)(2) Other Expenditures, \$3,522,700—pass; 3.(a)(3) Northern Health, \$231,400—pass.

Resolution No. 67: Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$30,188,700 for Health, Community Health Services (Operations), for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1990—pass.

The next resolution, Resolution No. 68, No. 4. Mental Health, \$40,609,900, item 4.(a) Mental Health Administration: (1) Salaries, \$313,400—the Member for Kildonan.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as of last year we have applauded the Minister on the initiatives they have taken to reform the system. The mental health care system was in a deep crisis last year when the administration took over. There were some major problems in the system and the announcement was made, that was in the first week of November, November 3, 1988, and later on an announcement was made in the House.

I just want to ask the Minister of Health now, under the announcement there was supposed to be an Assistant Deputy Minister and two executive directors of programs. Can the Minister of Health tell us the first position, the Assistant Deputy Minister, have they filled that position and if not, why?

* (1620)

Mr. Orchard: We have not filled that position and we are actively pursuing the filling of that position.

Mr. Cheema: Have there been interviews for the position of ADM?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, there has been.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us what are the criteria for selection for the ADM's position?

Mr. Orchard: We want the best person we can get.

Mr. Cheema: In other words, what are the minimum qualifications in terms of what is the academic qualification and what is the work experience required for such an important position? It has been almost one year, why has that position not been filled?

Mr. Orchard: We do not have, for instance, an educational standard that we are shooting for. We do not have a narrowed management standard that we are shooting for. We do not have a narrowed program delivery standard that we are shooting for. If we could find an academically trained professional with substantial community based involvement in program delivery and an excellent record in management, with all of those attributes combined into one individual, that would be the ideal candidate.

We are pursuing very pro-actively the recruitment process because in reality, as my honourable friend might appreciate, the reform of the mental health system that we have embarked upon is a very significant initiative and the Minister of Health simply cannot guide that. That has to be guided by senior people within the ministry who enjoy a similar vision of where mental health ought to go and have the ability to make things happen.

I am not telling tales out of school. My honourable friend, in terms of his knowledge of the mental health system, knows full well that there is some pretty solidly held views on mental health ranging from institutional to completely community based. There are some pretty strongly protected turfs in the mental health field and we recognize that some of the initiatives may be viewed initially as threatening to certain groups, either professionals or service deliverers or institutional based, even community based. We recognize that we in some ways are working our way through a bit of a mine field because the easiest thing to do is not to change anything, simply let the system idle on as happened for a couple of decades. I am simply not prepared to accede to that.

We have, as one of the first initiatives of this Government, set out on a pro-active reform agenda in terms of the mental health system and with some considerable assistance from within the department, as well as from professional groups and others outside that are involved in mental health, we have begun, I think quite successfully, that reform process.

I say without any hesitation to my honourable friend, I would virtually give my eye teeth to have had in place for six months the Assistant Deputy Minister, because that position is quite important to maintaining the momentum. However, we will attempt to assure ourselves that we have the appropriate management leader and program and professional leader to achieve that, not only at the ADM level but at the two executive director positions as well, because those are very key positions in implementing the reform agenda.

Mr. Cheema: As I said at the start of the Estimates, we are extremely pleased with the approach the Minister has taken as of last year. To achieve the result of that approach you have to have the right Minister, and I have no hesitation of saying in this regard the Minister is in the right direction.

The person who is going to deliver the program, the Assistant Deputy Minister, and it has been six months, and I am sure that there are a lot of people, qualified people, either within that department or from other jurisdictions, who will be very willing to take this opportunity. It is a very challenging one. I think it is the best time to do it, because you have a minority Government, and we in the Opposition will support you for any major changes that we have taken a stand that that is extremely important because this section of the health care has been ignored for a number of reasons.

Number one, these patients, these individuals are the ones who have been ignored in the past because they did not have the political clout and somebody was not speaking for them. I have given a lot of examples. If you have somebody with a coronary care waiting for a few weeks, then maybe the major news about somebody who is suffering from a depression or any other mental illness will be sitting at home and going through the hassles and the family is going through all the stress, but that is not a major thing. As we all know, all of us suffer at one time or another some kind of mental pressure, mental stress, and I am sure all the Members in the Legislative Assembly go through that too. Very typical people go through stress.

That is why it is so essential for 15 to 20 percent of Manitobans who use the Mental Health Care System either directly or indirectly that such a program has to be initiated and the ADM's position is extremely vital for the program delivery.

I just wanted to ask the Minister what initiatives they have taken out of Manitoba to make sure that we could get hold of an individual who is qualified for this position, who should have both academic and also management skills because it will be very difficult for only a clinical person to implement the whole system because it is common knowledge that we professionals will try to protect his or her own turf. I think just to protect one's profession is not the critical process. That is not the Government's job. Our job is to give the best person possible, give the best possible program, with the kind of dollars that we are spending. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong. I think we are the second largest spending for mental health in Canada over all. We spend more money on average than anyone else.

I just wanted to continue with my remarks here. Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is why we think it is extremely crucial that we have a person in place. The end results are not going to come in a month or two months or three months. It is going to take a long time. We do not want any, it does not matter which Government is in power, to be blamed every day in Question Period or in the political arena why this is not being done. If you delay every Monday, the end results will be delayed for a longer time because now I think all the political Parties are ready to make changes. The professions are ready to make changes. Above all the public is more oriented towards seeing that the mental health care system is reformed. As the Minister has said very clearly that the system was unbalanced, not only in terms of the delivery at the higher level, but even right now at the level of the institutional care or city hospital care. Eighty-seven percent of the budget is spent in

the hospital system; 13 percent of the budget is spent in the community-based programs. That is the major problem there, where somebody has to take initiatives and make sure that the transition is done over a period of three years, two or three or four, but we need to have a plan and definitely as long as we stay on this side of the House or the other side of the House, the public will decide.

We will support a definite change in the system. I think that people still cannot forget what happened during the Pawley administration. Unfortunately, I was in Manitoba only for five years. If you talk to the professionals or the caregivers in any field, they were extremely angry when they tried to close some of the institutions and release those patients into the community. The impact of releasing those patients in the community, the present administration is facing now. Because they do not have any system, they end up going back to the hospital system and that is where the problem is. That is why we are very clear on this policy. We should continue with our forums in the Mental Health Care System of Manitoba.

I am told that New Brunswick is also moving in the same direction to some extent. I do not have their total policy but I have written to them to send me a copy of some of the initiatives they have taken.

We have consistently met with the various groups in the mental health care system starting from the patients up to the major organizations, including some of the professionals who are the front-line providers of the health care system. Each one of them is ready to face this problem. It is not the psychiatrists anymore who are the major issue right now. I think it is the issue starting with the social worker, with the mental health care worker, going up to the primary care physician. The line does not stop. It is right up there.

By forming the system under one Minister and one ADM and having two program directors, I think it is an excellent way of doing it, but I think everything should be done to make sure that we have ADM in place as soon as possible.

My question is, who has been working for the position of ADM for the last six months since the reform in the system started?

Mr. Orchard: Two individuals have filled the position, Marge Watts and Dr. Keith Hildahl.

* (1630)

Can I tell my honourable friend that I certainly enjoy his endorsement and I want to make public an offer I made to him privately? He can join our Party anytime he wishes. With that kind of support, we would be appreciative of having him on board with a very progressive Government under Premier Filmon's leadership. - (interjection)- We will do a two for one for Gilles. At any rate, I am being facetious and my honourable friend knows it.

I very much appreciate the kind of support that I have received from my honourable friend in Opposition because it is important that we focus on the larger

picture of the reform of the mental health system. We know as we sit here, there are inadequacies in the delivery system that are not new. They have been there for a number of years. I know my honourable friend could bring those issues to the floor of the House and attempt to make a more narrow partisan political approach to mental health, but the system demands something much larger than that. The system demands a concerted effort by Government to reform the system. It is too easy in the reform of the Mental Health System to get caught if you will or involved in maybe some of the narrower issues, when you break down to the roots of them are vested interest positions that are put forward from any number of groups of individuals involved in mental health.

We attempted to do in the reorganization of mental health not to get involved in that, rather to bring all of the participants in the mental health system around through a very extensive consultation process. I have to give credit where credit is due. Marge Watts was highly involved in that as the lead person in the department, as my Deputy Minister was.

There were extensive consultations with professionals, from psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, et cetera, all involved, registered psychiatric nurses, et cetera. Because I may have missed some, I am not denigrating their importance to the system, because if you are going to attempt to achieve what I think people have talked about for years as a laudable goal you are only going to achieve that if people involved in the system understand where Government is coming from and understand the challenges that Government faces in terms of resources and reallocation of resources. What sort of knots in the rope are—if I can put it in farmer vernacular, where the knot in the rope comes in, where the difficulties are going to be.

I think I have to say that we have enjoyed an incredible amount of understanding and co-operation from professional groups, professional organizations and from the CMHA and other groups involved in mental illness difficulties and problems, tremendous co-operation. They understand and they support where we are coming from. I think they also appreciate the role that the Opposition has played in terms of encouraging and offering the encouragement to Government, because this is not a partisan issue. This is a people issue and we have attempted to do the reasonable thing in terms of mental health reform.

I will fully admit we will not be able to move as far and as fast as some of the advocates who have waited for up to a couple of decades to see change occur. Again I have to say that their patience is appreciated, because they could be constantly on our doorstep saying, you are not moving far enough fast enough, and they would be right, but there is the achievable that can be done, and I think we are moving well on that path.

In terms of the recruitment of the ADM position, we have advertised nationally in terms of the job description. Prior to advertising nationally we undertook a thoroughly extensive mailing of our health reform paper in mental health, including to all the provincial

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ministries of health. I think in part we received a number of favourable comments back from the different ministries in terms of the direction we are taking.

I think in part the New Brunswick initiative, although I cannot speak for the genesis behind it, I think that New Brunswick will have maybe taken some of the ideas that we have advanced in our reform package, chosen the ones that fit appropriately, and may well adopt them and try to implement them in their province. I think that is encouraging, because I say it with sincerity and with the best knowledge I have, I think our proposal for reform is on the leading edge across Canada in terms of provincial initiatives because we have brought together people who are essential to the reform of the mental health system in the province.

The recruitment effort has been preceded by a circulation of the reform agenda as envisioned in the mental health promotion paper and our reform paper. The national advertising program has indicated that we are serious about reform and that is why we are going to be very serious about the recruitment of the ADM.

In addition to that, the Canadian Psychiatric Association held their meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland, and because psychiatrists are candidates for the ADM position we struck an arrangement with the Manitoba division and the membership that were at the Canadian conference to sponsor I guess an evening at which participants at that convention were invited in to discuss the Manitoba reform initiative and the opportunity for psychiatry in general, the opportunity for administrative-minded psychiatrists, and the opportunity for the ADM. From that we may well pursue at least one interview that is in the making on that. I think we have done a fairly extensive job of attempting to put the right person in the right place because we fully appreciate the need for a leadership role in the ADM level.

One of the problems may, and I only say this for my honourable friend's knowledge, be in terms of our salary structure in Manitoba. Ontario for instance has the ability to offer a little higher salary package in the purest of form, in terms of salary, even though it costs substantially more to live in Toronto or in Ottawa, et cetera. That is not perceived to be a major inhibiting factor but I know it did somewhat jeopardize apparently the recruitment efforts for a Dean of Psychiatry.

I thank my honourable friend for his support that he has given all along in terms of this process and the support from the official Opposition.

Mr. Cheema: Before I go further, I just want to put on the record that, we are encouraging this Government on this issue. The support has been given by my full caucus along with my Leader to be very open in this issue. I think my Leader realized, when she was a sole Member, the number of complaints and her approach were a touch of the human person rather than just making a political issue of some of the issues. She has given me encouragement and I have to thank my own caucus in being so open to let me do this. I do not want to miss this opportunity and convey my message to them.

Mr. Orchard: You can join us anytime you want.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us if these two executive director positions are filled and who is in charge of both programs? These individuals, were they part of the past health care system in Manitoba or were they recruited outside of Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Marge Watts is the executive director on the program side and Dr. Keith Hildahl is filling the services side of the program.

* (1640)

Mr. Cheema: Dr. Keith Hildahl, I am told that he is also going to be the Director of the MATS. How is he going to fulfill both positions at the same time? It is a major responsibility. The centre itself is one of the only centres and I think maybe the Minister wants to clarify his position on that.

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend has clarified it. I did not feel I had the ability to indicate that he was leaving, for the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre. Technically he is on holidays right now but that will mean a recruitment for that position. I did not feel at liberty to make that announcement because I am not even certain whether it has been made a public announcement as of yet.

Mr. Cheema: I apologize if I have given any information which is not public yet, but it is common knowledge. When I called the Minister's staff, I expressed a problem at the Manitoba Adolescent Centre. I was told to talk to Dr. Hildahl and he took a step and rectified a situation as soon as it was possible. I think maybe somebody in the Minister's department is not telling him a few of the decisions—

Mr. Orchard: I knew that for quite awhile but I just did not feel at liberty to make it public.

Mr. Cheema: The question is on the philosophical approach which I will give the Minister a chance to explain. How do they want to achieve the balance between the institution versus community care? What is their planning? As I said earlier, whether it will be two years, three years, four years and how are they going to achieve that?

Mr. Orchard: There is no clinical agenda that says four years from now. We are going to be at 50 percent. I think my honourable friend probably touched a significant criticism of previous activity in that regard, where targets and agenda were set without the appropriate support in the community being available. That happened in the MR field. Let me share philosophically, where we are going and demonstrate that in terms of action taken already.

We have, in the course of the reorganization and establishing the ADM, the two executive directors. The single half of responsibility, if you will, in terms of mental health services. That reorganization effort I believe identified about \$980,000 of resource that could be

reallocated, that was reallocated entirely to community-based programs. I think it is fair to say that it came primarily from the institutional side. So that saving, or that identified resource on the institutional side was reallocated to the community side for a demonstration psychogeriatric program in the central region, for a suicide crisis team in Winnipeg, for a psychogeriatric team in Winnipeg, for an initiative in the Parkland region. My honourable friend knows, he has seen the initiatives. We discussed them I think at other points in time.

Secondly, over the past number of months I have had the opportunity to attend various self-help groups, some of which we have provided modest support funding for in the last number of weeks. It is not significant dollars but it is dollars that are truly going to support community initiatives. The Society for Depression and Manic Depression, we provided them with a \$12,000 first-time support grant from the Province of Manitoba.

I almost feel embarrassed when you are looking at \$200-plus million dollars that you spend in terms of mental health services presenting a group with a \$12,000 initiative. Let me assure you that although more would always be welcome. That was probably a more "thanked," if that is the word, initiative of Government than a \$2.5 million linear accelerator for radio therapy treatment at the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation. It struck right to the community with people involved, with people involved in the community.

The Salvation Army is part of an intermediate care facility aware from—it is still an institutional type of support service. There is no question about it. It is not at the psychiatric ward level, such as we have at Grace or St. Boniface or Health Sciences Centre or Victoria or Seven Oaks. Clearly it is a facility that we think will effectively intervene closer to the community at substantially reduced cost to the institution.

We are very closely monitoring the outcome of that program to assure its effectiveness and that it meets the sort of goals that both the Salvation Army and Government believed will be there. We do not have a target for moving away from the institution in X number of steps each and every year. Until we mature the Community Support Services through allocation of funds, we do not feel competent in taking some of the institutional dollars and reallocating them to community.

As we go through the Estimates my honourable friend will find that there are staffing years that have been reallocated from both Brandon and Selkirk to community initiatives. That is, I will not say is a painless process, but it is a process that we believe effectively shows the direction we want to move in, and effectively reallocates the resource to the community level of support.

* (1650)

Philosophically, that is where we want to be. I do not have any disagreement with the philosophical approach. Service delivery, by not necessarily always being the psychiatrist as the Mental Health Care deliverer closer to the community, is an effective way to do it. That is

the purpose of the multidisciplinary team approach. Some people's difficulties in terms of, let us say family dispute counselling, do not necessarily need a medical doctor or psychiatrist, a community mental health worker or registered psychiatric nurse. A social worker may well be able to provide that individual with the service.

Until we mature the multidisciplinary team approach for access to service, we tend to rely too heavily on the professionalization of Mental Health Services.

Another initiative, and I apologize for taking this much time, but the theme of empowerment to the community has been something that has been discussed on many, many, many occasions and we have very pro-actively moved on an, if you will, empowerment to the community initiative in every region of Manitoba.

The Mental Health Advisory Councils are established. I want to tell my honourable friend that the Minister's office had no input whatsoever as to who is on those councils. They were established entirely through the regional directors and the local people involved in mental health. They are very much a community representative group. They are there to assess needs, assess resources, assess direction, and to make suggestions to Government. They are not there to say to Government, we need this, thus and such or we need more resource, we need more of this. They are there to help Government plan the reform of the system in a very deliberate and very constructive fashion.

I say right from the start the establishment, the empowerment of the community through those Mental Health Councils, very much represents a risk to the ministry, to the Minister itself and to the Government. It has never happened before that we have put that kind of initiative to the community or that kind of approach to the community.

They could come and say, we suggest you close down Selkirk and Brandon and all of the intensive-care wards in the hospitals and put the money in the community and make it a very highly-publicized issue which Government could not accede to in short term, thereby embarrass Government by saying Government is not listening to us.

I have talked to enough people in the community. I have talked to enough organizations. I have talked to enough individuals who I believe have understanding and knowledge in the system. They say there is a better way, and we can do it within the existing resource base. I tend to be one of faith, having grown up with rural roots. I believe those people are sincere when they say that to Government. I believe that what they need is an opportunity to demonstrate that to Government. That is why I have promoted and we now have established the mental health councils throughout Manitoba. I really think that they will provide, through their very makeup that they have virtually all sectors represented from the hospitals to the various mental health centres, consumers, community, family members, care providers. They have a very broad range.

I am impressed with the kind of people who have agreed to serve, and there is an excitement out there.

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Make no bones about it. There is an excitement out there that here is an opportunity for people to decide, really a direction of Government, and how we ought to take it.

Let me tell you there is an advantage in the risk to Government. If some suggestions come forward that represent a real challenge to Government in terms of tough decisions and tough policy, it is not as if Government can be accused of sitting in the back corner of some dark and secluded shop plotting the overthrow of an institution in isolation of everybody else, if that happens to be a direction and a recommendation that unanimously comes forward. As well as the risk, there is also the benefit of providing Government with wise counsel that cannot be thereby accused of Government being on a partisan agenda, a narrow philosophical agenda, a narrow politically motivated agenda.

With the risk is also opportunity. I simply say that my discussion is over. I suppose three years as critic and subsequently as Minister, that those individuals who have had discussions with me are genuine when they say there is a better way that we can approach the delivery of mental health in Manitoba. We are trying to empower the community to assist Government, to be a partner with Government in achieving that reform.

Mr. Cheema: The Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) may not be present on Thursday so he wants to add some comments. I have a lot of questions on the counsels and some of the other organization measures that I will leave until Thursday.

Mr. Orchard: I have to apologize for taking so long in my last answer but it is one of the more exciting things that I have been involved with. I apologize for taking that extra time.

Mr. Ashton: I just wanted to put some general comments on the record. I am pleased to see that maybe this year the discussion Estimates will be able to concentrate on the specific items.

Last year there was a bit of a wrangle in committee between the Liberal Critic and the Minister in terms of timing of Estimates, particular items in Estimates. This is an important area and I just wanted to indicate that certainly in terms of -(inaudible)- we hope to be able to spend a bit of time, a fair amount of time in this area.

There are a number of important questions that need to be answered. I think everybody is in general agreement in terms of the shift from an institutional setting to a community based setting as being the key underlying issue in this particular field.

I would note that there have been some encouraging developments in recent years in terms of, in particular, the length of stays of individuals in facilities. In fact there are some rather dramatic statistics in terms of the length of stay decreasing, particularly for patients in a mental health centre for less than one year, increasing rather dramatically.

I know in 1983, for example, Selkirk, the average length of stay for those in an institution for 365 days

or less was 93.7. It had declined by 1987-88 to 47.4. That incidentally was paralleled by a drop from 70.1 in Brandon facility to 49.6 in 1987-88, once again over the same period of time. I think that is important because what we are looking at is that basic underlying principle.

We will, throughout the Estimates of this particular section, be raising a number of questions related to the initiatives announced by the Minister of high structure in this department, the six projects. The Liberal Member has asked questions that we will be asking in terms of the shift from an institutional setting to the community-based setting. While there has been a shift of that nature in the past, while Community Mental Health Services did grow fairly significantly, I know throughout the past decade I think there is a general consensus that much more needs to be done to be able to provide those resources in the community.

Consistent with that, we will be asking about the progress of the six pilot projects the Minister announced. I will be asking a number of questions in regard to the regional mental health councils. I will be asking questions in regard to the Health Advisory Network's role in this particular area. I will be asking questions in terms of specific treatment areas, whether it be young people; multicultural community; whether it be women and health; whether it be Native people, where there are particular needs that have to be addressed in terms of the specific focuses.

* (1700)

I will be asking about specific resources that will be provided in terms of research and in terms of proctors. That is a program I know is very important to the people in the mental health field. I will be asking questions about respite services, because that is also a fairly significant need, and also such initiatives that I know have been talked about in terms of this particular area, such as the proposal for an extended care forensic facility, and this has been something that has been talked about in terms of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre in particular. We will be asking the Minister for updates in terms of that particular project that I think has been called for, for quite some time.

I do want to indicate that we will be raising some questions, I think fairly important questions, direct questions for information, because it is an important area. I expect that to be a focus in terms of the upcoming hearing of the committee. I know our Deputy Health Critic and also our Leader will be raising questions on this particular, because it is a very important area.

I did want to indicate that where we can support the Minister we will in terms of any positive initiatives that are taken. That statement, incidentally, I made at the beginning of the Estimates procedure. Where there are disagreements, where there are crisis situations that require action, we will raise those as well.

I think it is important that we do so. It is not a question of political agendas, I think, as much as for the very important field we are dealing with here. If we, in the Opposition, are going to do our job we will have to be

asking questions, very direct questions to the Minister and assuring that the Minister is accountable, not even strictly to us but to the many people the Minister himself alluded to in the mental health field.

There are a lot of people very concerned about this, whether they be directly involved either as former patients, or patients, I suppose or family members or communities. I know that is the situation throughout Manitoba.

We will be spending whatever time we have available in this particular department asking the Minister some very tough questions about the need for legal action in mental health.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): If I may interrupt the Member, the hour being 5 p.m., it is now time for Private Members' Hour. Committee rise.

SUPPLY—CO-OPERATIVE, CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Neil Gaudry): The Committee of Supply will now be considering the Estimates of the Department of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Before we invite the staff from the department into the Chamber, we will hear opening comments from the Minister, as well as from the critics of the two Opposition Parties. The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Merci, M. président suppléant. Thank you, Mr. Acting Chairman. It is my pleasure to introduce the Estimates of the Manitoba Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs for the fiscal year 1989-90.

As you know, Co-operative Development and Consumer Affairs were amalgamated to improve the efficiency and economies in the administration functions of both departments. May I say at this point in time, the amalgamation has accomplished what we had hoped it would accomplish, one department that is financially responsible and efficient.

In many ways, Mr. Acting Chairman, this is a very unique department. It performs many functions, economic and social development, maintaining regulatory standards in the marketplace and administering the standards. This department deals with the consumer, as well as the province's business community.

Whether we develop farmers' markets in rural communities or register a business name in Winnipeg, we are committed to educating all Manitobans on their rights and their responsibilities in this province's marketplace.

I do not want to take too much time in reading my remarks so I will follow the same order as the department's names. I will make remarks firstly on the Co-operative Branch, secondly on Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Co-operatives has played a very important role in the social and economic development of this province.

At present, there are over 400 co-operatives operating through this province. Their functions range from commercial fishing, day care, housing, gas bars, farmers' markets, to name but a few. For example, the development of the farmers' markets in Manitoba has been an extremely successful endeavour.

Presently, 18 such markets are operating throughout Manitoba. Currently plans are to increase this number by approximately 15 to 20 next year. We are aware of the very importance of the farmers' markets in this province as well of their popularity. The increased interest in the markets by Manitobans have shown us that the markets are a very vital part of this province's expanding marketplace.

We have been working with northern communities with relation to gas bars. Since the inception of the Gas Bar Program, I am please to report, Manitobans in the northern regions of this province have saved approximately \$1 million. As a result, northern communities have access to over \$600,000 in grant funding from the federal Government.

Our credit unions and caisse populaire segment of this branch has been extremely busy. As you know, credit unions and caisses populaires in Manitoba provide jobs for over 1,300 Manitobans, as well as, financial services for thousands of Manitobans. The fact that over 345,000 Manitobans utilized credit unions and caisses populaires indicated that these two financial institutions are vital components for the future success of Manitoba's economy. It should also be pointed out that 40 communities only have a credit union or a caisse populaire as their financial institution.

This is a branch that is looking towards the future. We realize that we can anticipate changes to our social structure so we are reviewing this province's Co-operative Act to make sure we are staying in touch with the ever changing marketplace. As an example, we will continue to work with the federal Government on strategy for the development of worker co-ops.

A federal-provincial ministerial conference was recently held on this topic, and it proved to be quite productive. We will also continue to work with the federal Government of Canada on employment, health care and other co-operative issues.

Mr. Acting Chairman, as I pointed out earlier in Question Period, Manitoba led the debate on trying to establish a federal-provincial program on worker co-ops, which we think could be a very vital segment of our economy and very significant to workers.

Basically, the policy and direction for Co-operative Development in 1989-90 will be as it has always been, maintain a pro-active approach to development of new co-operative enterprise. We will ensure that more newly incorporated co-operatives become operational as quickly as possible.

In the Consumer and Corporate Affairs area of the Department our main objective has been twofold: to get consumers and business people to work together to solve their problems and to educate both on their rights and responsibilities within Manitoba's consumer protection laws.

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* (1430)

What we strive to do is improve the efficiency of Manitoba's marketplace by dealing with the public on a daily basis. As an example, in fiscal year 1988-89, the department's Consumers' Bureau dealt with over 2,700 written complaints. As well, the Bureau handled more than 51,000 telephone inquiries. The Insurance Branch received over 14,000 telephone inquiries and processed over 400 complaints. The Manitoba Securities Commission dealt with over 50,000 pieces of mail requesting information and handled more than 180 complaints regarding problems in the securities field. The Corporations and Business Names Branch received 55,000 telephone inquiries and handled more than 39,000 personal counter searches of corporate and business files. Finally, in 1988 our Communications Branch distributed over 60,000 pamphlets to Manitobans requesting consumer-related information.

Many people wonder what this department does and what benefits it provides the public. As you can see, Mr. Acting Chairman, Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs works with Manitobans extensively, and we take pride in the service and programs we offer the public.

Now, to our department matters. Aside from last year's amalgamation with Co-operative Development, the department structure of Consumer and Corporate Affairs remains virtually the same as last year with one change. Mr. Derwood Walker was appointed chairman of the Manitoba Securities Commission, and Mr. Edward Robertson was appointed full-time chairman of the PUB. Previously both branches were chaired by Mr. Robertson. However, because of the extreme workload of the two branches it was decided it would be in the best interests of the department to have a chairman for each branch.

Mr. Acting Chairman, 1988-89 has been a very busy year. Let me review some of the departmental issues that have been dealt with. Members of the public now have access to information on Corporation Branch records via computer terminals from their own office. It is no longer necessary to personally come into the department's Corporation Branch in order to do a name search. Because of the new system, searching activity has increased each month since the public has become aware of the new system. The Province of Manitoba has been meeting with various provinces on financial institutional legislation and regulation.

Last October the Province of Manitoba signed an informational sharing agreement with the four western provinces. The agreement became the prototype of a Canada-wide information sharing agreement covering trust and loan companies, insurance companies and credit unions.

We have recently introduced legislation that is aimed at curbing unfair business practices. The need for a business practices Act has been recognized for some time. Indeed, it has been under consideration by several previous administrations. As my critics might know, such legislation exists in six other jurisdictions. The legislation in these jurisdictions encourages a fair and honest marketplace. Such legislation is important, not

only for consumers, but for the vast majority of business people who operate in a forthright manner.

I have also introduced, for first reading, amendments to The Consumer Protection Act. I think it is very important, and I am extremely pleased that the Consumers' Bureau officers have been working as part of a team with Winnipeg police, RCMP and the Department of Housing investigating fraudulent practices in the home improvement field.

With the help of our department, police have laid several charges. So far, two individuals have been found guilty of fraud and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. As an indication of the changing environment in which the Consumers' Bureau must operate one of those individuals was given an extra two years in prison for threatening a Bureau officer.

The Superintendent of Insurance has undertaken discussion with industry officials to create a self-regulatory organization to license and regulate insurance agents, brokers and adjusters. The framework for self-regulation of this aspect of the insurance industry is presently being developed. Plans for the establishment of a property and casualty insurance compensation plan to compensate policyholders in the event of the failure of a general insurance company were finalized.

Manitoba and other provinces have recently completed a plan to compensate policyholders. The Superintendent of Insurance, along with his colleagues in other provinces, are working towards developing a similar plan in the life and health insurance industry. The Real Estate Division of the Securities Commission has been working with the industry to establish a more improved and efficient method of public protection than the current bonding system.

As you are probably aware, this proposal has already received second reading in the Legislature. The department encompasses all the regulators involved with the financial industry, that is the Securities Commission, insurance, trust and loan, credit unions, caisses populaires. As a result, we are reviewing all legislation in this area and are working closely with our counterparts across the country.

While it is necessary that we amend our legislation, I think it is important that we create as much harmony as possible in regulation across the country. To not do it will prove to be costly and ineffective for the protection of the public and create jurisdictional shopping by financial institutions.

Besides reviewing our current legislation we will also review regulatory frameworks for financial planners and for deposit brokers. I am extremely pleased to say that for the first time in its history the Public Utilities Board appointed a member from northern Manitoba. We have expanded the size of the board to ensure that the board represents the interests of all areas of the province. We do have, indeed, a woman from Churchill. We also have, for the first time, a woman vice-chairman, a bilingual woman from Brandon, which I think is very significant.

Mr. Acting Chairman, these are just some of the issues our department has been dealing with over the past

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year. I can assure you that given the department's very broad mandate these were just a small portion of the many issues we reviewed or investigated. To put it into a nutshell, our policy and direction for the upcoming fiscal year will be to continue to forge ahead and play a pro-active role in this province's marketplace.

We believe it is our responsibility to continue to ensure a fair and efficient marketplace for both Manitoba consumers and businesses alike, which, after all, are the supply and demand sectors of our economy.

Besides our regulatory responsibilities, one of the ways in which we are meeting this goal is to educate the province's youth. There is still a growing concern in various segments of the Government and private sector that many of our youth are ill-prepared to cope with the financial aspects of living in an adult world, away from the protection of their families and friends.

My department is working towards the development of a national life management economic skills course for Grades 11 and 12 students. It will have the type of information that is important for the financial survival of a young adult leaving high school. This course will contain elements of consumer and economic education, entrepreneurial and business education, financial management, career education and citizenship. As you can see, it will highlight practical knowledge and skills young Manitobans will require when leaving high school and entering the adult world.

What this department tries to do, and will continue to do, is make Manitobans a little more aware of their rights and obligations, whether as a consumer or as a business person. We will continue to provide Manitobans with information, learning opportunities, and resources that will enable them to develop their consumer skills. As well, we hope to broaden their consumer knowledge so they can function competently in the complex and changing marketplace.

Mr. Acting Chairman, I have presented, to this committee, a brief overview of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I refer the departmental 1989-90 spending Estimate to your committee for review and passage. Thank you.

* (1440)

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): It gives me pleasure to make a few opening remarks. They will be relatively brief to the Minister's statement.

I might say, the Minister, shall I compliment him on the fact that this other half of his responsibility, so to speak, is much more upbeat and pleasant, we might say, than the Workers Compensation part? I would like to commend the Minister on many of the thrusts of the department that he has mentioned, their past activities and some of the plans that are in the works now for the future.

The department is there to look after the interests of both—it has been mentioned—the consumer and the business person in the marketplace, so that each may prosper in an honest and forthright manner. We need regulations, particularly for protection of

consumers against fraud and so on, but at the same time while we are doing that we do not need to unnecessarily hamstring the business person or firm.

I just mentioned some of the things I would like to mention later and in more detail. Mr. Acting Chairman, there are some issues we want to address a little later on. There is not one single burning issue or several of them as in Workers Compensation, but some things we would like to put in the record and bring up.

I should mention that the move to increasing the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Board was a very positive one. We would also like to check later and I am sure our critic in the third Party will be bringing this up, how the resolution of the Brick's Fine Furniture is. The case is proceeding, we are concerned about some changes to the Consumer Protection Act, or I should say The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, Bill 63, which I have suggested in writing just a few days ago to the Minister that I think that an amendment to that Act should be made now to alleviate the problem that is under way now with the Exemption 2, Part VII I believe of the Act.

Some of the things that we think that the department can be and should be addressing are things like the matter of car sticker prices with the particular equipment and manufacturers' so-called list prices on them; things like the mechanical certification of used cars before they are sold; the discrepancy in gasoline prices between the city and the rural areas; of course some of the price wars, the way gasoline prices seem to unnecessarily go up and down in all areas; matters such as credit card interest which alone is a federal matter. The interests of the consumer need to be pushed by the particular provincial departments responsible.

Again, I note in the Minister's address he has made reference to some of the educational informational thrusts of the department for which we would like to commend the Minister and the whole staff of the department. We think again that this is one of the major functions of the department, not only to have the necessary legislation and rate regulations in place but to see that the public, in particular, young people who are starting out into the work force that they are well informed.

So we would, as I say, commend the Minister for this and urge him to continue thrusts in that particular direction. That is all my comments for the opening remarks, Mr. Acting Chairman. I will turn it over to the critic for the third Party.

Mr. Bill Uruski (Interlake): I, as well, will be brief but I am not sure that I will be full of platitudes like my colleague from the Liberal Party. I want to say that I am a little surprised that the Minister would and did see fit to bring forward a long list of accomplishments in what I would consider a rather weak attempt to suggest that he has accomplished anything in this portfolio over the last six months.

Mr. Acting Chairman, surely it is rather obvious that far from initiating anything, he has simply bowed to political pressure and agreed to reprint some of the NDP Private Members' Bills that have been on the Order

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Paper for about a year and a half. Now in doing so the Minister has managed to make most of his public utterances on Consumer Affairs almost a joke since he is now endorsing what he and his predecessors previously attacked. In fact, the Minister's own statement is an admission of the total failure of his predecessor, the Attorney General, in the same portfolio from May 1988 until May of this year. This Government has made it quite clear when the department was combined with the Attorney General's Department that Consumer Affairs played a very low priority with this administration.

As one observer noted, Mr. Acting Chairman, the move was a little like some of the recently announced plant closures: to serve you better we are closing your branch and amalgamating all manufacturing at our Toronto and Montreal offices. That is really what happened to the Consumer's department. Small wonder that most observers agreed that the only reason that this department was spun off again this spring was, I guess this Premier's (Mr. Filmon) refusal to place great trust in this Minister with any department where he would be on the hot seat. So you have to give him a nice, quiet area.

The Premier thought that in this portfolio he would, I guess, avoid some of the controversies of last year where the Minister said that the ozone layer was not a problem, that workplace regulation should be changed to avoid labelling dangerous chemicals, that our own province had a great future as a toxic waste dump, and that the environment would look after itself.

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Chairman, small wonder that the Minister was replaced and that department was once again made a full department. However, far from ending this controversy, this Minister managed to defend out-of-province warehouses operating here without registering. As well, he defended discount meat stores using questionable practices selling overpriced meat. Opposing taking action against con-artists preying on seniors and small contractors, or even health spa owners selling long-term memberships at the same time they were closing some of their offices and their outlets. Pyramid sales scams, and of course, the question of car dealers refusing to put manufacturers' sales price stickers on new cars.

* (1450)

Mr. Chairman, I want to tell the Minister on that question alone, I have to tell you that I had occasion personally to walk into a dealership here in the City of Winnipeg, a new car dealership, where I was looking at pricing a new car. I had obtained that very price at the manufacturer's list price from our own dealer in our home town. There were no stickers on the vehicle, and the salesperson there quoted a price 10 percent higher than the manufacturer's list price for the identical vehicle. When I confronted him that I knew something of what figures were given to me by another dealer, well, he said, we are told by our owners that we have to relate this price. I venture to say if I was a consumer that really was not out price checking. I may have been

talked into making a deal, or at least starting my negotiation, at 10 percent higher than the manufacturer's list price. Obviously, you know where that would lead, and we will get into that discussion a bit later on.

I would hope that in addressing the role of the Public Utilities Board this Minister would now take the opportunity to back off and retract his, what I would call, only pro-active stand on any public issue, and that being his support for higher home heating gas prices and giving to ICG the right to cut seniors and poor off from the service in the middle of winter.

My colleagues and I were, to say it bluntly, horrified earlier this year to hear that this same Minister, when he spoke as Consumer Affairs Minister, would assist shareholders of Inter-City Gas stock rather than seniors or the poor.- (interjection)- Well, when you start advocating for higher prices, who are you speaking for?

Probably, Mr. Chairman, the most ridiculous statement of all in the Minister's speech is the claim that he and his colleague, the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), maintain a pro-active approach to the development of new co-operative enterprises. Philosophically, at least this Minister knows that conservatism and co-operativisms are at the extreme end of the philosophical spectrum.

He at least, for one Minister, I believe, does not believe what he is reading into the record. He knows what conservatism is all about. So to come and tell us that they are somehow pro-active for the co-operative movement is almost to say to his colleagues I am repudiating conservatism because, philosophically, they cannot be aligned.

If this Minister, in fact, is saying that I am wrong and that they are supportive of co-operative development, let him come out with a statement and tell us about how he is going to help the 150 parents who have lost child care in the Maples area of the City of Winnipeg, due clearly in large part, because of the failure of both the Conservatives and Liberals in their position of funding private day cares instead of non-profit or co-op day cares.

If this Minister had any commitment to co-operatives, he would have announced, before now, that he and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) were funding an emergency parent-run co-operative day care centre in that area of the city. Instead we hear the opposite. His refusal provides, once again, that he really understands what conservatism is all about; cannot have great commitment to co-ops or interest in assisting parents who want to start co-ops.

Mr. Chairman, it is a consistent record, not a very good one, but I think I will pause for now and let the Minister continue with his script that he has been provided. Hopefully, the next time he will come forward there either may be a change of heart or one that will, in fact, provide more clarity as to his commitment, or otherwise to both branches of Government.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few comments in reply. We see two different approaches

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here by the two critics. We see an objective approach by the Liberals, which I appreciate. I think we are going to have probably some very good meaningful discussion from that side. Of course from the NDP side we are already into the muckracking. This is unfortunate when we are dealing with such an important department.

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) states that there is a lack of accomplishments by us. We have been in power for 18 months. A lot of legislation was even started during maybe even Conservative days. The Business Practices Act, in essence, was first conceived and started back in 1975, which was back in the Schreyer days, and then went through the Lyon days and went through six and a half years. When it was now starting to take formation, went through six and a half years of NDP times, and did not have the desire or the willingness to bring forward the legislation to protect consumers.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I can assure you that I am quite pleased to have the portfolio I have and the time to give the department that it has required and has been so sadly neglected by, especially the previous Government and during the previous six and a half years. He says that we bow to political pressure. I can tell you the political pressure that I have been under has not been from the side that he believes, but from some other sides that are concerned about The Business Practices Act. I can assure you that The Business Practices Act is there to deal only with those very few bad business people and it will have no effect on anybody that is an honest broker.

He talks about a very quiet portfolio, having Co-op Development, Consumer and Corporate Affairs and also Workers Compensation. It is quite ironic that for outside of the early stages, the Member for Churchill also had Workers Compensation and Environment, where he was a total failure. I should not say he was a total failure, he started the demise of the Workers Compensation. He did have some great success in politicizing it and leading it to its demise. He only had Co-op Development right through until the fall of the NDP Government when the people of Manitoba finally got fed up with the bad management and the way they were treating Manitobans and threw them out.

I think when he says that we have a quiet department, when his own Member only had Co-op Development and did not do a very good job on it, when we look at the record of the Member for Churchill, it was quite pathetic.

The Member brings in a few other things, like ozone layer, that I was not concerned about it. Well, the Member knows, and of course he puts on the record and that is the ploy they use, that I was not concerned, yet in our department it was the No. 1 issue. I can assure the Member that it was I, when I was chairman of CCREM, who put the CFCs and the ozone layer on the national agenda before Ontario and the other departments. After viewing a CBC documentary he got involved. We were concerned about it pro-actively and had it on the national agenda. That is on the record for anyone to examine.

He talks about pyramid sales and this sort of thing. Well, the Governments, both federal and provincial,

were investigating the pyramid sales. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) knows very well before you can lay charges that you have to do your investigations. It is foolish and childish to make accusations that in fact have no factual basis.

I can tell you that in our department, for the first time, we are now consulting aggressively with seniors when we are dealing with education, when we are dealing with legislation. They have been in my office to discuss legislation, to ensure that what we are putting forward is something that will service the seniors, along with all of the other people of Manitoba. I am very proud of that. They have been in my office several times to discuss various problems they have.

* (1500)

Mr. Chairman, he likes to say that conservatism and co-operativism are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Well, there is nothing that is further from the truth. Maybe the Member was not here, he so seldom is, when I answered a question in the House that my father was a founding member of a co-op in 1946. He might remember that, he was Minister of Agriculture, which was a great St. Vitaler -(interjection)- that is right, there are some great people from St. Vital, some. I will say, unlike the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) now, when we were discussing the pyramid sales business, was quoted as saying, a fool and his gold are soon parted. He tells me he was misquoted and I surely hope that the Member was, because I would not want to think that anybody would make that sort of a statement when somebody was maybe getting cheated out of their money.

But, Mr. Chairman, Conservatives along with Liberals are very great co-operative people. The co-op movement is not the domain of the NDP. In fact I think if you took a look at the members of co-ops in Manitoba that you would find the NDP card carriers or even voters of the NDP would make up a very small number of those members of the co-op movement. The co-op movement is not a domain of the NDP. It is a tool that all Manitobans can and do make use of and make use of it very effectively. I am very proud to be the Minister responsible for co-op development. With those few comments and rebuttal I look forward hopefully to some meaningful debate, and keep it on the high road I would hope.

Mr. Chairman: At this time we would invite the staff from the department to join us in the Chamber.

Would the Minister care to introduce the staff?

Mr. Connery: Deputy Minister, Don Zasada on my immediate close left; Dennis Robidoux from Consumers Bureau; Fred Bryans from the Finance side; and Karen Gamey from the Communications.

Mr. Chairman: As usual we will postpone consideration of item 1.(a) until the end of this department's Estimates. Therefore we will commence with item 1.(b) Administration and Finance, Executive Support—the Honourable Member for Radisson.

Mr. Patterson: Would the Minister just explain the increase in the Minister's office of the staff year increase

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from .17 to 4 and the salary component from \$4,600 to \$129,700.00?

Mr. Connery: When the departments were split, of course, the Minister's staff went with him. The Attorney General took his two secretaries and the EA and SA. So when we assumed responsibility for that department we had to add the secretarial staff which are two and an EA and an SA. That is four staff members.

Mr. Patterson: Would not some proportion of that EA and SA component of the Minister of Justice, when he had this particular department, have presented more than the .17. Two or three people left and two or three came in; I think we more or less just exchanged them.

Mr. Connery: .17 was term time in the Deputy Minister's office? In the Deputy Minister's—just a term, .17 which is seventeen weeks.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, just to ask the Minister in terms of the Executive Support, and I do not have the Further Explanatory Details Book with me, the increase in Salaries and Other Expenditures in (b), is that offset by the increase of the secretarial and political staff of the Minister's office? Is that the direct offset from last year's budget of \$108 and \$36.9?

Mr. Connery: Yes, it is directly related to the four staff, plus the normal increases could be some affirmative action, the regular increments that go along.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass. Shall item 1.(b)(2) pass—pass.

Item 1.(c) Communications, shall 1.(c)(1) pass—the Honourable Member for Interlake.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, in the Communications Branch the staff component is the same. Can the Minister indicate the nature, any change in terms of the approach that the department is taking, and the type of what I would call "advertising" the department takes? Has there been any change in the way the department is advertising to the public on various consumer issues?

Mr. Connery: Basically, there has been no change. I guess if anything, we have become more pro-active. We are involved with the educational program that I explained earlier. We can get into more detail if the Member wants, but we are looking at our educational component.

We are very strong in the volunteer program, which Karen works with very closely, and we have a director for the volunteer program. So if there is any change, it is just basically that we have become more pro-active.

Mr. Chairman: Item 1.(c)(2)—pass; 1.(d) Administration Services: 1.(d)(1)—pass; 1.(d)(2)—pass.

Clause 2. Consumers' Bureau, item 2.(a)—the Honourable Member for Interlake.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, the Minister quoted from the statistics as to the number of complaints or inquiries that the Consumers' Bureau has handled.

Can the Minister indicate, is there a breakdown of the nature of the problems that they have handled and/or the resolution rate? Knowing the numbers of complaints, how many of the complaints was the branch able to resolve, and where, and what percentage or what numbers of complaints were in fact not able to be handled by the branch because of either: a) lack of legislative authority, and/or b) outside of the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Consumers Affairs Branch?

Mr. Connery: If the Member for the Interlake would look at the Annual Report and look on page 18, he would see the nature of the activities of the Consumers' Bureau, those carried over from last year, those that have originated this year and charges laid, et cetera. We can go through it, if the Member would like and read it through, but it is on page 18.

It gives a fairly good breakdown of the activities of the Consumers' Bureau that I think is really—I am very pleased with the Consumers' Bureau, they have done an excellent job in mediating on behalf of people.

* (1510)

Until we get our Consumers' Protection or the Businesses Act in place and also the amendments to The Consumers' Protection Amendment Act, that the department has been very pro-active in working as a conciliator in trying to resolve problems between the consumer and the business community. They have been very, very effective. Just recently two people went to jail, one got six years plus a few months; one got four years plus a few months; and the reason one of them got six was for threatening staff. I really want to put a good word in for the department because it is a very difficult task they have had. We are also getting much better co-operation now from the police to help us with laying charges.

I think that the Consumers' Bureau is doing an admirable job and when we get the new legislation finally passed, hopefully before the end of the year, that we will be able to be more pro-active in the sense of protecting the rights of consumers and making it a more level business playing field for all businesses. It is unfair when some can take advantage. I am very pleased with the Consumers' Bureau.

Mr. Uruski: Is the Minister and/or the branch involved at all in national consultation on dealing with consumer packaging? What is occurring on a continual basis in the field of, I guess consumer products, but grocery lines, soap lines and those areas? There is almost on a monthly basis a change in the packaging size and what appears to be occurring is that along with it there are price increases. There is an attempt to say that consumer packaging is becoming more convenient.

In fact I have had occasion to deal with one large soap manufacturer who decreased the size of their packaging by 20 percent, and increased the price of their product by about a corresponding amount. So

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you are getting 20 percent less for a 20 percent higher price. We started corresponding with the manufacturer, and I believe that the packaging may be a federal matter. I want to know what kind of discussions take place between the province and the federal Governments? Does the Minister play a role in this area nationally?

Mr. Connery: This particular subject has not come up as a matter of federal-provincial relations. The Member is quite right when he says that it is federal legislation. We have been involved in developing packages for various products. You have to go to the federal department to have approval of the language, the size of the printing, and what is on there. That has to all be approved by federal legislation.

The other side was if there is anything misleading or deceiving in packaging, so forth, under new legislation coming forward we would be able to be pro-active if there was advertising, or in fact there was an attempt to deceive the public. The new legislation would allow us to be pro-active in curbing it. Basically, the packaging is of a federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Uruski: My intent on raising this matter is of course not so much on the question of misleading advertising and/or the language and the like. I believe that most of these companies in the dry goods area, as I would call it, or food processing area are national companies so that their packaging goes both nationally and, I would venture to say, even internationally.

When they do start changing packages I am sure to save some money in terms of their costs, but not very much. I will give the Minister an example. Look at and get involved in discussing a particular soap product in large cartons. The question that we raised was, as I said, price and quantity. Quantity reduced by 20 percent and price went up by almost a corresponding amount. We wrote and said, hey, what you are doing by changing the size of the packaging, almost on a regular basis, is creating a lot of confusion for consumers. The response that we got back was, well, the new package that we have created is of a more convenient size for consumers, and it will be better utilized by consumers. When we put the two packages together there was not one quarter of an inch in size difference between them, one was a 12 litre container, or containing 12 litres of product, and the other was a 10 litre product. No difference or appreciable difference in size to, quote: make it more convenient for the consumer.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would urge the Minister that the next time he is at a federal-provincial conference that there may be a discussion, or at least raise the issue, as to the standardization of packaging that might be beneficial for the long-term interest of consumers so that consumers can truly make a choice in terms of the product they want. What is occurring is that you will have one manufacturer saying, and I will give you soap as a particular example, I am selling you 10 litres of soap. One will say I am selling my soap by weight, by kilograms. As a consumer you walk into a retail store you say, my God, how do I figure this thing out? Now on top of not being used to the metric system, you become totally confused in the process.

From a consumer perspective I want to indicate to the Minister—while I may have given him a bit of a

difficult time at the beginning, I also want to push him to be an advocate and see whether he is prepared to be an advocate, on behalf of consumers, when it comes to packaging of food and dry good items.

Mr. Connery: The Member raises a good subject. I cannot argue with him. I think it is a good point that he is making. There is one large store that puts on their containers a per unit price, whether it is a gram or whatever, a kilogram, whatever. It is on there so you can compare. I think as big an issue with containers is the environmental aspect of it. I think that is one that, well, I know when I was Minister of Environment, in spite of what the Opposition likes to say, the facts are that we did more in 11.5 months in the Environment Department than the previous Government did in 6.5 years. We did look at containers and we are concerned that the proliferation of containers and the proliferation of plastics cannot be recycled because they have to be separated. We are very cognizant of that.

I was just noticing an ad on TV recently where one of the soap companies, and I do not remember the name, now use a container where you buy them in throwaways, where you clip it and you fill your container. It looks very environmentally, I think, advantageous. You buy your one container for using it, whether it is a spray or whatever, and then when you get a refill it is just a little, wee, thin, plastic bag and you pour it into the container and you throw away your little piece. Environmentally, that is very good and we really look forward to a lot more discussion. Of course when we get into containers, we can go on and on and on, and whether people are confused or not confused.

Of course I think there is some obligation on the consumer to be able to analyze what they are buying and to compare. I think there is some obligation. Yes, if there was some deliberate deception being employed by the store or the manufacturer to deceive the consumer, then of course the new legislation would allow us to review that. As far as the packages and labelling, it is of a federal jurisdiction, as the Member well knows.

* (1520)

Mr. Uruski: The Minister raised the question, and in fact in my own notes I wanted to raise the question of environmentally safe products. Again that whole issue becomes part of the Environment Department, but the Consumer Affairs Department I imagine would play a secondary role in this whole area. I wanted to ask the Minister; the item that I raised with respect to the question of automobile ticketing of retail prices, can the Minister indicate how he intends to deal with this question? I am sure the Minister, in his remarks, his rebuttal to me, said he had been meeting with seniors especially to go over some of the legislative amendments that he is proposing.

I am sure there are many seniors who come into businesses and because the businesses have been in the community for many years, the aura of trust is there. Yet when it comes to automobiles and the practice that I have personally witnessed occurring, you may

find—and I am sure there will be seniors who will end up signing a deal for a new automobile not on the basis of its manufacturer's list price, but on the basis of the price that the salesman ends up quoting—may have no relationship to the manufacturer's list price at all. In the case that I was involved in myself, it was 10 percent higher than the actual manufacturer's list price.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Chairman, we have discussed the sales price of cars and the sales price stickers quite extensively. We have talked with the consumers and the seniors. We have talked with the automobile industry. We have been trying to work out something that will be compatible to both groups.

It is important that the consumer be protected, and at the same time we have to have it that businesses can function. The Member should know quite well that sometimes a manufacturer's suggested retail price is not necessarily what the dealer has to sell for. Their Fiesta was advertising at \$7,995, and these are guess figures, but the dealers could not sell at that price because there was advertising, freight, and everything else involved in that price. There was no way the dealer could sell the vehicle for the manufacturer's suggested retail price. We have to look at some of those things, and we are concerned.

We are still working to get something where we can have a resolve to the dilemma, but at the same time we have to make the marketplace work. We do not want to put something in place that will totally throttle the marketplace.

We would like to see something in place for now. As the Member knows, this is not something new, it was before his Government for some period of time. These are not new issues. They are issues that have been around for years. Obviously they were wrestling with that one too, because they did not bring something forward. We think that in the near future hopefully we can have some resolve to it where we can have an understanding between the consumers and what the retail automobile dealers feel is something they can work with.

We are still examining it. There are no doors closed, and we are reviewing all the options open, looking for the best avenue to accommodate or protect consumers and still allow the business people to work without a whole lot of paperwork.

If you make something too complex, then you drive up the cost because it becomes so burdensome there is an extra cost. As you know it is not the businesses that absorb it, it is the consumer. We do not want to do something that is going to unnecessarily drive costs up. We want to have something that will protect the consumer, and at the same time allow the dealer to function quite efficiently.

Mr. Uruski: Maybe I did not understand or read the Minister correctly. Maybe I am not understanding the issue correctly. Can the Minister explain to me, or at least clarify for me, what the difficulty is with the dealers association in not wanting to publish the list price of an automobile?

I know I walk into the dealers in my home area and there is that General Motors sticker. It may not be the company that puts it out, the dealer may be doing it himself or herself, and the retail price is there. From there you begin the negotiations, which is fine. That is where it begins. What is occurring—and maybe I did not understand the Minister correctly, he gave me a model of a car and said that the dealers could not sell at the advertised price. I mean, is that correct? Now, if that is correct, then in fact would they be saying that the dealers themselves had to charge a price higher than what was advertised? Is that in essence what he was saying?—because maybe I am not understanding him. Obviously what is advertised is the price you could buy it if they have, and they should have that particular model if you are prepared to buy it. I hope he is not telling me that they have advertised at, say, for \$7,900 or whatever price he gave, and you walk in the door and you cannot buy that kind of a car because it is \$8,900.00. Maybe I am wrong in the way the Minister put it, but maybe he could clarify that for me.

Mr. Connery: Well, the Member, for your edification, it was a nationally advertised price put out by one of the major car manufacturers, wanting to have a price under \$8,000, and so they did, \$5 under. Do not quote the figures as being that, but very close to that figure. So everybody sees it and hears a price of \$7,995 and I want to go in and buy that car. The dealers, they did not have all of the costs involved in that car included, so by the time they put freight on and there is certain advertising that they have to have, there are a whole lot of other costs that the dealers have to pay, and so the manufacturers had a suggested retail price that did not give the dealers any margin and so it is very difficult in cases like that. How do you say to the consumer, here is the manufacturer's suggested retail price, but you are going to have to pay more? Everybody goes into an automobile dealer's store with the understanding, here is the price that is suggested and we are going to come down from there, nobody every pays more money. Mind you, there have been some foreign cars where the suggested retail price was such and such, but because of scarcity people were prepared to pay more.

A manufacturer's suggested retail price does not necessarily mean this is the maximum price that a dealer can sell that vehicle for, it just says this is the value that the manufacturer says that it is worth and is consistent through all dealerships. But do not forget you have all of the various options and everything else that goes into a car, so you can take a Ford Mercury and have a certain price on it, but what is all in it? Has it got air conditioning, has it got power brakes, has it got speed control? So you have to look at all of those things and at what price and so it is a complex situation when you are dealing with a MSRP. We joked about it in our office the other day, what does MSRP stand for, it could be "my suggested retail price" and so it could be what that person wants for his car.

But, nevertheless, there were cases where the MSRP, as we know it, the manufacturer's suggested retail price, was a price that the dealer could not make a margin on, and so that creates some problems to those dealers

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and of course the consumer says, well, if you are going to charge more than \$8,000, obviously you must be ripping me off. In essence, they were not being ripped off. I hope also in our discussions, while in every sector of business there are some bad apples, by and large, most businesses are good and I would not want to leave the feeling, which I thought maybe came out from the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski), that the automobile industry was a sector where we had a lot of problems. I do not want to single out any industry. There are some bad apples in every industry and I think the automobile industry, by and large, is fairly responsible.

* (1530)

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, I want to tell the Minister that I was not casting any aspersions on the entire industry. I know that dealers in my area do put the stickers on, usually on the side windows of the car. They list the base price of the car, they list every extra that car has and that is there for the consumer to see. That is where you walk in and say, m'huh, \$23,000 or whatever, \$16,000 or whatever, the car you are looking at.

But, Mr. Chairman, I just want to take the Minister up on his comments. Is he saying that the advertisement in the paper of X price for suggested retail price of that car, that I as a consumer, when I saw that ad in the paper, cannot walk into a dealership and demand that I get a car that was advertised here for that price, that I cannot get a car for that price? Is that not breaking the law? Is that not against the law of advertising that when you are advertising a particular product as the manufacturer's retail price, that says \$7,995, and I walk in there and I want a car that you have advertised, you are not going to give it to me, you say it is going to cost me more?

Mr. Chairman, I question the Minister's statement in that regard and I would like him to clarify that.

Mr. Connery: Obviously the Member does not understand what the words "MSRP" stands for, manufacturer's suggested retail price—"suggested." So the very fact that they make an advertisement of \$7,995 as their suggested retail price, there is no obligation on the automobile dealer to sell it for that price.

In that one particular case that was brought forward by the automobile dealers was a very graphic example of what can happen with MSRP. So if we are going to have MSRP, we have to have it in the true form, of not a large manufacturer using a price to get people flocking to the showroom, it has got to be a price that is reflective of what the dealer can at least make a margin on at that price. Because as I said earlier, and the Member knows very well that once you put the MSRP on, everybody expects to get a car for that price or less, but there is no obligation on the dealer to sell that vehicle at the MSRP. It is a suggested retail price.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, I asked the Minister in his discussions then with the industry, did he also ask them

what is involved in their returns and the like, what are their markups, what their volume discounts are, and all the other added features of the automobile industry?

I am starting to get the impression from the Minister that maybe I am not understanding the industry's concerns in this whole area, if in fact the manufacturer, and here is maybe the distinction that there is, if the manufacturer does the advertising on behalf of a particular model that they are promoting through dealers, this may occur.

I am not sure that I accept. I would accept the industry's statement that they are not prepared to provide an article which they have advertised at the price they have advertised. If that is one way of getting around and in fact would be very close, I would contend to being I guess—what is the word?—that the advertising is being very close to suggestive and being false.

If you are advertising a particular price, even though it says MSRP and you are saying, no, I want more money for it, I venture to say that in some areas your legislation would find that as being contrary, and that your staff would say, no, you cannot do that. Only in the area if you say that your manufacturer's suggested price, if they would have those figures, is that where the legislation or the difference in approach takes place, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Connery: The Member is confused and he is starting to confuse me a little bit. If there is a suggested retail price, the manufacturer can put any suggested retail price out on his cars that they want to. There is no law that says they have got to have a price that reflects all of the markups, or the cost that an automobile dealer has. There is no law that says that.

So they put out a suggested retail price and naturally, if you say \$8,005 or \$7,995, the \$7,000 and the \$8,000 are the operative figures that people tend to remember so often, so they like to have something under \$8,000.00. But that is not misleading and it is not deceiving, in the sense that they say this is a suggested retail price. Then the dealer says, but they have not taken into account some of the other costs that go with the automobile industry and there is a lot of them.

Sure, depending on the size of the operation, there are volume discounts, and all of these other things. I am very aware of those things that go into the price. But at the same time, a dealer in MacGregor, Manitoba, would not get the same volume discounts as say somebody in Winnipeg, but the suggested retail price is the same. So to say that is the price they have to sell that vehicle at is wrong, they do not have to sell at that price, it is a suggested price. They are not deceiving anybody in the sense of it being a good price or below cost of production. They are not misleading anybody. So that our legislation I do not see would have any effect in the trade relations of that particular aspect.

Mr. Uruski: Well, Mr. Chairman, the automobile manufacturers put out books on prices of their automobiles to the dealers with all the costing figures

of all the options, and all those prices are listed in the book. I would think that in that whole process, and in fact it is the dealer in MacGregor that he talks about, it is those dealers, those small dealers who have no difficulty in putting those stickers on the cars. That is precisely my point.

It is the little dealers or the smaller dealers outside the urban settings who have no difficulty of using those stickers as the base price because they know they have their markups in there. They are using those stickers, but it is the large volume dealers here in Winnipeg that do not put them on. They are the ones that would get the volume discounts and what other incentives that the automobile manufacturers offers them to provide that. So why would they object? Maybe I do not understand. Why would they object to putting the manufacturer's retail price? When they open their book, this is the irony, they are there. The retail price is there, and then you ask them the question, well, why did you quote me a price 10 percent higher than what is in your book? There is no answer. That is really the point I am getting at.

The markups are already built into that whole area, and I do not understand the reluctance. Maybe I do not understand the problem from the dealers' point of view, but it is not the little dealers, the ones who want to sell higher. They are the ones who are glad to put the manufacturer's list price on the windows. You go to any small rural dealership you will find those stickers there, and so they are not the problem. The problem are these here in terms of the discrepancy in the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Connery: Well, Mr. Chairman, can the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) assure us that manufacturers will not squeeze the dealers? Can he guarantee us that the manufacturer's suggested retail price will include all freight, all advertising, all other costs that go with a dealership that they have to incur?

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) cannot assure us that the dealers or the manufacturers will not start to squeeze that margin line. Everybody knows the Member for Interlake raises turkeys and knows very well that he has to get something more than just his feed. I know that sometimes in agriculture we do not get more than the feed, but you sure work towards that end. He cannot assure us that the manufacturers would not put in a price that does not cover all of the costs. The critic for the NDP, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), has a Bill in on MSRP stating that if the retail dealer does not have an MSRP tag on the window of the car, on the side window I believe it is, he did not indicate whether the window had to be rolled up or down, but if he did not have a price tag on the window that 60 days later that individual could come and bring the car back. That is the kind of thing that we find very, very silly. That somebody could take a car out and make sure that you got a witness that there was no MSRP on the car, drive it for 59 days and bring it back, and then say that you did not have the MSRP on so you have to give me my full money back, those are the kinds of things that I think we have to be more realistic in, and that is some of the things that we are concerned about.

* (1540)

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, I ask the Minister then in his dealings with the industry, how does he perceive as dealing with this situation because he cannot say whether the companies will not squeeze the dealers. As well, he indicated that it is the small dealers who may not have the volume discounts and cannot offer that price. Quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, it is the small dealers who do that.

I know that in his community of Portage, I am sure that if he walked into almost every dealership there, I do not know his community totally, but he would find that sticker. I know if he comes into our area in Arborg, the dealers there generally have the MRSP on the new vehicles. I am sure that in most smaller communities that tends to be the base price where the consumer then has at least a chance to see, without coming to the salesperson and saying, look, pull out your book and quote me a price on all of this. That is the other side of the coin. You then have to go to the salesperson and say, what is on this car, and start listing off and then totalling the retail price. You will end up doing the same thing.

Where I found it personally was once the books were open, the price that was originally quoted was even different and higher by 10 percent than the manufacturer's sales price. I have yet to hear the Minister, or at least to understand the Minister's version of how the industry has convinced him that this is not a good idea.

Mr. Connery: The industry has not convinced me that we will not have some sort of pricing arrangements. As I said to the Member for Interlake in the beginning, we are still reviewing it with the industry, and we want to see what the consumers will also have to say. I can tell you that the consumers met with the automobile association to see if they could work out something that was mutually acceptable, and they could not quite come to an understanding of what was there. Maybe at some point in time the Government will then make a decision as to what they think we should be doing in relation to MSRP.

The Member must know that every vehicle in a showroom of a given make or model has many various options. So you cannot just look at a Ford Mercury at a certain price and say hey, that is the MSRP. What is in that vehicle? When a person wants to go shopping from one dealership to another looking at the same model of a vehicle, they have to know what all of the various options are on the vehicles and what the value of those options are. It is somewhat complex when individuals go from one dealership to another. They have to have the information there, and they have to have some ability to do some shopping. I had a feeling again that the Member for Interlake was saying that the auto dealers were gerrymandering the books by having some figures they said were not there. I hope the Member did not say that because I do not think that would be fair. I do not think any of the dealers would do that.

Mr. Patterson: I did not think this particular topic would go on at such length. I might mention in one of my

previous incarnations, I spent some 15 years retail merchandising a rather large Canadian firm and do lay some modest claim to some knowledge of retail pricing and so-called list prices. I might try to shed a little more light than heat on the subject.

We should realize, Mr. Chairman, that in the first place it is against the law for manufacturers to try to establish a price at which any piece of merchandise must be sold. That is the strength of competition. What we now call the manufacturer's suggested retail price many years ago was simply called the list price.

It is just a matter of convenience for manufacturers, be it automobiles or anything else, to have their costs. They must sell their goods at something beyond their costs in order to make a profit and a return on their investment, and so on. Rather than publish, let us say, a manufacturer's price to which that manufacturer will sell the dealer, and the dealer is perfectly free to sell that for anything he or she thinks they can get for it, rather than establishing a manufacturer's price to the dealer or the retailer, let that individual or company set whatever retail price they want. They publish it as a what used to be just a list price and now called the suggested retail price, and then their pricing to their dealers is some discount from that and usually enough to provide a sufficient markup that if the dealers do sell at that price, they are doing all right in covering their costs, and so on.

At any rate, Mr. Chairman, some of this was alluded to in the exchange between the Minister and the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski). To me, so far as automobiles are concerned, the key thing in having that sticker on there is not so much the price, but that certifies specifically what is in that automobile.

Every car that is turned out has that sticker on it, listing whatever it is that is standard and then has been mentioned the various options. This to me, Mr. Chairman, has a value in it. I know this from personal experience having bought a car in Minneapolis when I was living there in the early '70s and it was the law in Minnesota, at that time and presumably still is, that the manufactured sticker had to be on the car.

The thing is that whatever is in there the customer then knows. Now when the sticker is not there—I am not casting any aspersions on the car industry generally or on any particular dealers. Nevertheless I know this from experience in the particular business I was in, which was largely furniture, merchandising, when you had a salesman on commission, the pressure is on those salesmen, or salespersons I should say, to make the sale. Sometimes the salesperson will take a little bit of liberty with the facts of the truth, and the customer might not know it.

In my experience in ordering, I did not buy this particular car in Minneapolis, it was not a floor model, I specified what I wanted on it and it was ordered from a factory. The so-called list prices were quoted to me and then we arrived at a deal on the total package and that was it. Nevertheless, everything is listed there.

Four years ago I bought the car I have now from the same manufacturer of which I am very much sold on

the products of that manufacturer, a North American one I might add, good old rear-wheel drive, four-door sedan. Nevertheless, this is a model that was on the floor and no sticker on it.

I had originally intended to order this particular car from the factory with the various options I wanted and had not intended to buy at that time. At any rate my wife rather liked the colour of this car, which was a great incentive for the sale. The salesman said: oh heck, this one has all the stuff you want on it. One of the things I was going to mention; I wanted the trailer package.

Knowing that the sticker existed when we went in to sign up, I asked him for the sticker. Well, he said I cannot give you the sticker, I will give you a photocopy of it. I think I have it filed away somewhere. At any rate I looked at it and here the trailer package is not on this car. A heavy duty suspension component of a trailer package is on it, but not the wiring harness or the little extra cooler for the transmission. I said, you told me this had the trailer package and here it does not.

* (1550)

If I had not seen that sticker, I would have accepted his word for it. I would have discovered later, maybe if I had taken the trouble to look in front of the radiator, that the extra little radiator was missing. I would have missed the wiring harness, of course. This is the fundamental idea of having the sticker on there.

I would say to the Minister that this does exist, they say, in the State of Minnesota, and has for probably a couple of decades or more. I do not know offhand if it exists in any other jurisdictions in Canada. It is really no handicap to the dealers, in any particular jurisdiction, because whatever the rules are they are all playing under the same rules.

If the sticker legislation is passed, the sticker must be on new automobiles. They are all in the same boat. Nobody is in a competitive disadvantage. Again we cannot fault any dealer. Any dealer is perfectly free to charge more or less than this so-called manufacturer's suggested retail price because it would be clearly illegal for manufacturers to try to impose any fixed retail selling price on any product, cars or anything else.

Mr. Connerly: The Member for Radisson is absolutely right when he says the manufacturer cannot impose a price, it is a suggested retail price. There is no question, when you are dealing with a model of a car that you have to have all of the accessories listed on there so you can compare to know, first of all, what you are buying. In your case, if you are buying something for a trailer, is the total package there, and you are very right.

The other thing that you have to know is the value of the various options that are on a car so if you are going to do comparing between one and another, and if they are floor models, not ordering them in special. If you are ordering it in special then it is quite easy to compare from one dealer because here is what I want, here is the model and here are the options that I want

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on this car, so you go from one dealer to the other. They can quote you on all of those options.

I think most people buy off the floor or off the lot, and that is when it is important that all of the options and the value of the options are there so you can add them up on this car and add up that car and so you have an idea.

I never did say that we have ignored or we have quit looking at some sort of pricing structure for retail cars. We have not quit or given up looking at a pricing structure. All that I have said is that we have not come to something that I am prepared to bring forward at this point. We are still going to have negotiations or discussions between the consumers and the retail automobile dealers and, at some point in time, when we are ready to bring something forth then we will do that.

Mr. Chairman: Item 2.(a)—pass; 2.(b)—pass.

2.(c)—the Honourable Member for The Pas.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the Minister could tell us where these grants are, the \$76,000—they have been reduced, where the reductions will be and what organizations will be without Grants.

Mr. Connelly: I am pleased to say to the Member for The Pas there is no reduction in Grants. There are \$56,000—something for the Credit Counselling in Winnipeg, which is in the core area, to help people who require credit counselling. One increase, and I am very proud of it, that we have increased the Consumers Association from \$10,400 to \$20,400.00. The exact amount for the Financial Counselling is \$56,100, so there was no increase. There was only an increase, part of the money went to the Consumers Association in Brandon, and the Consumers Association were very pleased with the extra money that they have to represent consumers in the marketplace.

We met with the Financial Counselling group and I was quite impressed with their program. It is a program that I have not seen yet. We want to get to visit their premises and it is only a few blocks away from here on the north side of Portage. But I was very involved with what they call a LEAP Program in Portage la Prairie, which was Local Employment Assistance Program, which was more encompassing than this. This is only straight financial counselling, but I am very cognizant of the need to help people. Some people need more help than others and young, or whatever, that need some help with their financial affairs, and I think it is important that we have it. We are going to be viewing those premises and I am supportive of that particular group. I think it is very much needed and maybe even some expansion would not be out of the question.

(Mr. Gilles Roch, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Minister says he has been fairly involved with it. Everyone knows that the cost of living for Northerners is much higher and with the goods and services tax that will be coming

in, although it is not applicable to the foods that we purchase, transportation will be certainly affected by the goods and services tax. Has there been any consideration given of establishing a northern section of a consumers group, because I know that there are some people who are doing voluntary work for organizations to make sure that the cost of living is not completely out of sync with what is going on in southern Manitoba, and has the Minister considered giving any support to any groups from northern Manitoba?

Mr. Connelly: Mr. Acting Chairman, we have had no requests from northern groups for assistance. I think the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), who is a Northerner himself, is aware of that. We would be very receptive to anyone coming forward in any consumer groups.

The Consumers Association of Manitoba, which is the umbrella group, gets the financing and on a schedule puts the money out to the various groups. At this point there is only the Winnipeg chapter and the Brandon chapter that are getting funding from the provincial group, but we are very receptive to any group of consumers that would like some help or whatever, whether it be financial, we would review it.

We have to go to Treasury Board, as the Member knows. Any increase in funding that would be requested would have to go to Treasury and to Cabinet.

There was a very active consumers group in Portage la Prairie and basically they did it on a volunteer basis, used the local Cablevision channel to advertise what they had found in pricing and so forth.

So any group that would like to talk to us, would like to have some help in organizing, we are very receptive to it. We are, in the sense that people if they want help, prepared to help them. All they have to do is request some assistance from the department and we will sit down and talk to them.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, has the Minister and/or the department, I know it is a difficulty with lack of staff, but have you done any comparison on cost of living from a point like Thompson, for instance, to Winnipeg, and have you any results from any of these consumer groups?

You said there was a voluntary group in Portage la Prairie, and I know that there were some voluntary people in the community of The Pas and in Thompson as well. I am wondering if the department has been privileged to get that information as well?

Mr. Connelly: The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, I am told, is doing some surveying across the provinces. If there are specific complaints, then of course our department would take a look at those complaints.

The cost of food in the North, I have to agree with the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), is—I would not use the word excessive because I am not involved in the transportation and what goes on in moving products into the North. I am not going to suggest for one minute that there is any price gouging or any

unethical practises in the cost of food in the North, but it is no doubt quite high.

The other thing that bothers me, and I think the Member should be aware, is the quality of the food in the North. Partly, it is because of the distance for transportation, but secondly, is the turnover volume that is experienced in smaller communities. The Member very well knows that if you do not have a very high turnover, the quality suffers very quickly. If you buy a bag of carrots, or you buy a case of lettuce and it takes three weeks to sell it, the quality deteriorates very quickly.

At the same time, the cost of selling the product is higher because of the lack of volume. I do not think there is any gouging, but we would be, if there were complaints, as there are in different occasions, prepared to investigate specific complaints.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just the other day there was an announcement that Canada Post was going to be increasing their air freight for remote communities in northern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario.

Everyone knows that these remote communities are faced with a very much higher cost of living because, as you mentioned, there is not as much competition in there, and the turnover of your food is not as great as there is in even a community like The Pas. There is competition in those areas, and I think there is a healthy competition in a community like The Pas, but some of the remote communities which depend on that air freight are hit very hard. There was a 30 percent increase in air freight, even though the Post Office had made over \$90 million profit in the last year. Has the Minister taken any initiative to speak up on behalf of the people who are going to be affected by these increases in air freight rates?

* (1600)

Mr. Connelly: The Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) well knows that we have an excellent Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) who has been in dialogue with the federal Government on an ongoing basis, and I have all the confidence in that Minister that he is representing all Manitoba citizens in this community and not just Northerners, all over this province, but indeed there are some concerns in the North and the cost.

I know that the Minister is concerned with the rail line abandonment. He is concerned with the rail line to Churchill, and now he has a five-year guarantee if I recall—(interjection)—Do not quote it? But, he has an extended guarantee of a line to Churchill so the Minister of Transport (Mr. Albert Driedger) is, I think, doing—and it is to his domain to do that and the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) well knows that that is under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport, but I can say that I have all the confidence in knowing the Minister and knowing his dedication to Manitoba, his hard work, his tenacity.

He is a real go-getter when it comes to defending Manitoban's rights, and I know that the Department

of Transportation is in excellent hands with a very fine Minister, so the Member can be assured that those needs of Northerners and anywhere in Manitoba will be well served by the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I wonder if the Minister is aware of the colleague that he has just praised so highly, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Albert Driedger), has taken any initiative and interceded on behalf of the people in Churchill who will not be able to ship the perishable goods that they had been—they had an assigned car previously with VIA Rail, but because of some decision made by the federal Government, those rail cars are available to anyone else who may want to be shipping other articles up there besides perishable goods. I wonder if the Minister can tell us what interventions he has made or the fine Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has made on behalf of the people of Churchill to make sure that they get their perishable goods up to that community.

Mr. Connelly: The Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) has caught me, obviously, very flat-footed. I am not aware of the cars, but I can assure the Member that if there is a concern there, we will address it, but obviously if there is a car designated for produce and there is room in that car, they are going to ship something else in it. I think that would only make sense that if there is excess capacity within a car that they not only just put produce in it, they put something else that is compatible. They would not want to have chemicals or anything that would be of a non-food or would have some taint to food, but if it is a refrigerated car, which I am sure it would have to be, any time you are shipping produce that far north it would have to be a refrigerated car, so if they put in a container of boots or socks, I am sure they would not deteriorate if they were refrigerated all the way to the North. I do not see any harm in that.

So if there are some economies that they are trying to achieve by shipping other goods along with food items, I see nothing wrong with that. In fact, that would maybe add to the enhancement of the line and to ensure that the line stays in place.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the line certainly does need to be enhanced, but that is not the problem. There were two assigned trailer cars on VIA Rail that some other—previously, they had a protection, perishable goods were getting protective status on those lines and then after the federal Transport took off that protection and there were other commodities being moved. Building materials were being moved into the community so those cars were not available at that time.

There was some difficulty in getting the perishable goods up to Churchill, so there is no doubt about it, VIA Rail needs to have its services enhanced, and I am pleased with some of the initiative that the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) has taken and, along with the mayors and councillors from the surrounding communities, has made it possible to ship eight shiploads through the Port of Churchill this year, and

I think that is going to help enhance that line to a great degree. But we need to start worrying about next year.

The Member here for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) is not concerned about it, because he or his constituents do not require the Port of Churchill. I think if he looks at the long-term results of losing the Port of Churchill that he would not be laughing, he would be crying, because that port, that is available in the middle of Canada, should be supported by all the people, not only from the agricultural community but from all sectors of society, because I think if that port was accessible to the Americans they would be utilizing that port to a much greater degree than we, in Canada, do. I think it needs to be enhanced.- (interjection)-

An Honourable Member: He just tried to put some false documentation on the record.

Mr. Harapiak: The Member for La Verendrye is saying I am putting false documentation on the record, and I wonder if he would stand up and tell me what false information that I have put on the record.

Mr. Helmut Pankratz (La Verendrye): The Member indicated that I was taking that lightly, and I was not. I was just going to correct the Member that his statement was false that he was putting on the record.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Acting Chairman, I really am incensed that the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) would cast dispersions on the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) who is, in my estimation, a very excellent MLA. He is a person who is concerned about the Port of Churchill and concerned about all Manitobans. Also, he is one of the finest potato growers that Manitoba has coming out of Steinbach, some of the best potatoes and shipping some of those potatoes do, indeed, find their way to Churchill.

So when the Member for The Pas would cast dispersions on the Member for La Verendrye that really hurts me, because I know the Member for La Verendrye well. The Member for The Pas, when he was making these comments, was himself smiling. So he was not serious, but I really would not want him to put those sorts of things on the record, because the Member for La Verendrye is one of the most Honourable Members of this Chamber.

Mr. Harapiak: I agree with the Minister's statement completely. I think the Member for La Verendrye is an Honourable Member of the Legislature, and I know he is one of the finest potato growers in the Province of Manitoba, and I do hope that many of his potatoes do get up to Churchill. I did not want to cast any dispersion on his character, but I was under the impression that he was saying I was putting some statements on the record which were false, so I just wanted to correct that. So I am glad he corrected it, and he did not say anything that was false.

I am wondering if the Minister has taken the initiative to become acquainted with that issue since it was raised in the House here on several occasions. Has he taken the time to become acquainted with that perishable goods shipment to Churchill at all?

Mr. Connery: Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, I can tell the Member for The Pas that the Port of Churchill and the whole shipping, the reshipping and the servicing of people in the town of Churchill, and the area surrounding the Churchill area have been something that I have studied very extensively. There are several reports. In fact, I think there are three fairly large reports that, if the Member wanted, I could very quickly go to my office because they are sitting on top of one of my containers.

I spent a lot of time when I was in Opposition studying the Port of Churchill, the amount of people who are serviced out of the Port of Churchill. There are something like 20,000 people who are serviced outside of the Town of Churchill in that whole Hudson Bay area. We have looked at the cost of shipping via rail, shipping via the bunker oil especially out of Montreal and out around by water.

We also looked very closely at tourism, and tourism is another important part of Churchill. When the NDP took office in 1981 there were something like 20,000 people who were touring Churchill. By the time they left office we were down to 13,000 people who were touring Churchill, a disaster really for the Port of Churchill and the people who are in Churchill. That also lowered the consumption of vegetables, which did not help for the turnover, the cost and the freshness.

* (1610)

So I am very cognizant of the importance of Churchill as a port, as an alternate port for shipping grain, and the importance of Churchill to us as an economy, as a tourism addition. I think it is one of the finest tourist spots. It is unfortunate that the previous Government did not have the wisdom or the intellect to have put a pavilion in Expo in B.C., which all people said was one of the disasters that tourism and the Port of Churchill ever experienced, because there was - (interjection)-

The Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill), who was the Minister, said if we could only tell all of the Europeans about Churchill we could get thousands more people up into Churchill as tourists. We had the opportunity in B.C. to tell the Europeans who came in droves to Expo in B.C., but we did not have a pavilion there. We did not have anything to tell how good Manitoba was. We did not have an opportunity to talk about Churchill, the Port of Churchill, the tourism up there, the polar bears, the whales. We missed out on an opportunity to really do something meaningful for Churchill.

The previous Government just turned their backs on those people and said, well, we are not going to spend, I think it was, \$3.5 million. They had the mock-up, they had everything designed to put up a pavilion. I saw it. It was a beautiful display. We would have had a pavilion in B.C. that we could have been very proud of, but what did we do, we had nothing.

Alberta, Saskatchewan—I think, was it not Alberta that had some little sign that said "Manitoba pavilion somewhere else?" We were a laughing stock at Expo, and I really think that was a shame, but I guess the sad part is the fact that we did not have the opportunity to glamourize and promote Churchill.

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As the Minister then said, if I could only have told Europeans what we have. The Europeans were here. We had the opportunity to tell them. We did not take advantage of it. I think it is a sad commentary, and I know the new Minister of Tourism (Mr. Ernst) is really trying to promote Churchill again because it is a very viable business up there.

The bears, to watch those polar bears, the wild animals, in true life I think is great. We saw a couple of the whales, and we hope to go back again and to really spend a little more time in Churchill. So while the Member sounds very concerned about Churchill, the record of the previous Government has not been one to show that example.

An Honourable Member: The way you are talking I want to go there right away.

Mr. Connery: The Minister of Transport (Mr. Albert Driedger) said he wants to go there right away. The Minister has been there several times, and I can tell you there is no more advocate of Churchill and the tourism that is up there as the Minister because he has been there so many times, he understands the beauty and what it means to those people up there.

So this Government is very supportive of Churchill and we are very supportive of the rail line. The Minister of Transport is watching this very closely and is very devoted to ensuring that we maintain the rail system that we have, VIA Rail, all of these things, and I am very proud of the Minister.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): Before I recognize the Member for The Pas, I would like to remind all Honourable Members of Rule 64.(2), Speeches in the Committee of the Whole House must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion. Let us try to adhere to that Rule. The Honourable Member for The Pas.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Acting Chairman, thank you for bringing the Minister back down for the Estimates in his department, because as usual when the Minister was a critic for Tourism he would get carried away and exaggerate all kinds of figures. He did not make sense when he was a critic for Tourism, and he does not make much more sense now.

If the Minister responsible for Transportation wants to go to Churchill there is a great opportunity. The Port of Churchill protection group from The Pas is having a meeting up there Saturday. So I would hope that the Minister would take the opportunity to jump on the train out of Thompson and go up and visit the Port of Churchill, and then he would have a first-hand look at how the produce car, that was assigned to VIA Rail, would still be in place and unfortunately—

An Honourable Member: I am one of a few guys in this House that have gone by train.

Mr. Harapiak: The Minister of Transportation said he is one of a few guys in this House who has gone by train, and I think that is an exaggeration because there

are several Members of this House, I am aware of, who have gone to the Port of Churchill by VIA Rail.

I want to tell the Minister that I have worked that line for many years, both in passenger service and freight service, so I am well aware of some of the difficulties that the consumers in northern Manitoba are faced with when they are living in an isolated area like Churchill.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

So I think it would be a real loss if the Minister of Transportation did not start looking after his responsibility of getting the goods moved up to Churchill and meet with VIA Rail and find out why that car is no longer designated for the produce that it has moved up to Churchill.

An Honourable Member: If you sit down I will tell you.

Mr. Harapiak: Okay, get up and tell me.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, before we leave the Consumers' Bureau there are a few things I would like to bring up that I alluded to before. First of all, under The Consumer Protection Act, Section 7, I believe it is, that deals with direct sellers, one of the clauses in Section 7 lists those various exemptions to the Act, and one of those exemptions refers to any service of a domestic nature, including gardening.

Now, I have been in correspondence with the Minister on this and am awaiting a reply from the letter just of a few days ago, but to me that is perfectly plain English, "any service of a domestic nature." Well, this could cover a wide variety of services obviously but for whatever reasons—and the Minister informs me they had a legal opinion on it at the time, long before his time or mine—the bureau has interpreted this phrase to mean only "live-in domestics."

How, through some type of, what I would call, "tortured reasoning," a phrase like "any service of a domestic nature" could be interpreted to mean only "live-in domestics" is utterly beyond me. I would suggest, as I did to the Minister, that it is really not the prerogative of any bureaucracy or subsequent administrations to reinterpret a clause such as that where there is really not that amount of ambiguity but rather the legislation itself should be changed. If the original legislators had intended that only live-in domestics be exempt that is the way the legislation would have read.

So I would suggest to the Minister and ask him if he would—whatever the policy of the present Government is going to be that the opportunity is here now that it should be put forth in an amendment very shortly to Bill No. 63, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (3)—care to clarify that for me, please?

Mr. Connery: While I indeed had a couple of conversations with the Member for Radisson, and I can understand where he is coming from, The Act says a "domestic" and a domestic in our interpretation is somebody who lives-in on a regular basis.

In the case of the company that the Member mentioned there was door-to-door soliciting, I think it

was by brochure or whatever. Of course, door-to-door soliciting comes under The Consumer Protection Act.

I think when somebody hires a live-in domestic there is maybe a little more attention paid to who they are going to have in their home. Not to say that any of these other people who are cleaners—because in our case we have a cleaner come in, I am not sure what it is now, every two weeks or whatever, very similar to the company that the Member for Radisson mentioned—but if they do door-to-door solicitation, The Consumer Protection Act says that they have to be licensed and they have to be bonded, and there are some fairly good reasons for that.

If you have companies going around to do cleaning services, which is really what it is, it is a cleaning service, and if they are not licensed or bonded, especially bonded, if there is damage to that particular residence then of course there is no comeback for those people. So by having the cleaning companies, really is what they are, who go to a particular home for two hours or three hours every week or two weeks, three weeks, if they are not bonded and there is damage done then there is no comeback.

If you have somebody who goes out and does something and really does not have any resources then the customer has no backup to claim. So by bonding, if there is something that happened, something is done wrong or something disappears, there is a bond that the homeowner can then call upon the department. There are several times that happens, where a bond is called and people are paid off for damages or whatever the case, is through The Consumer Protection Act.

* (1620)

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I understand full well what the Minister is saying, but nevertheless, I must reiterate that when any service of a domestic nature, if the original legislators had meant specifically live-in domestics, that is the way the legislation would have read. "Any" service obviously implies more than one. This particular section of the Act deals with direct selling. The firm that we are concerned with in this particular case obviously is a direct seller, but there are some exemptions clearly listed for this licensing and bonding of some direct sellers.

I am merely saying do not try to defend that clause, this misinterpretation of it or twisted interpretation, change the legislation. I have no legal training, Mr. Chairman, but as I said, I would wager a considerable amount that if the particular company took this to the court and wanted to spend the time and money to do it, they would be upheld.

Mr. Connery: Well, I respect the Member's concern, and we are not trying to be argumentative on it. We know he is coming forward with what he perceives as a legitimate concern, and it is a legitimate concern, but I guess, where do you start and stop with domestics? Is it the Roto-Rooter person?

The consumer protection legislation very clearly says when you solicit, whether you buy door to door, by

telephone where you are going by brochures, mailings and so forth where you are encouraging somebody to purchase your goods, if the homeowner wants to look at an ad in the paper and do their own investigation, that is of a different nature, but in this particular case there was door-to-door soliciting. Where do you start and stop in it? Maybe the Member is right. Maybe we need to clarify the legislation a little bit where it says that a domestic is somebody who is of a live-in nature. That is really what our interpretation of it is. It is somebody of a live-in nature doing domestic work, but that could be a nanny doing babysitting plus cleaning.

In the case of door-to-door selling, we feel and the legislation says that there should be licensing so we know who is out there. You would not want just anybody saying we are cleaners. They would go into the house and take that consumer to the cleaners by taking whatever they have. We believe it is important that there be some control over who is going into houses, bonding, and as a domestic nature. Where do you start or stop even of a domestic nature in cleaning as to how far do you go? There is a concern.

I am prepared to talk it over more with the Member. He sent me a couple of letters. The last one I just received and will be going to the department for some evaluation. I am prepared to sit down and talk to him as to what he might think we might need in an amendment. If something is required to just make it a little clearer, then maybe we should do that, but I am quite prepared to talk with the Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson) to see if we cannot resolve it to both of our satisfaction.

Mr. Patterson: Again, I understand full well what the Minister is saying, but nevertheless this particular part of the Act does deal with direct sellers who must be licensed and bonded, but exemptions are listed. All I am saying is that I am quite sure the original legislators did not mean that clause to be a live-in domestic and that it is a very flawed clause then. If that is all that is meant or if that is the interpretation the bureau or the Government wishes to put on it, well, it should be amended and say so. That is my only point.

"Domestic" in the concise Oxford Dictionary and Webster's New World Dictionary refers to the day-to-day running of a household, work such as performed by a cook, butler or maid. It would not include outdoor work and major repairs and so on, and this particular company is offering that type of routine day-to-day domestic service.

I have a great respect for the English language. It can be a very precise instrument. Also, there can be ambiguities from time to time and particularly in legislation and contracts of various sorts, some ambiguities that must be resolved, but in this case it is just a unilateral imposition of some desired definition on something that clearly does not fit. All I am saying is, Mr. Chairman, change the legislation. Do not try to twist the interpretation.

Mr. Chairman: Item 2.(a)—pass.

Item 2.(b)—the Honourable Member for Radisson.

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Mr. Patterson: Where are we here? Item 2.(c), that is the end of the—

Mr. Chairman: We are on 2.(b) at the moment.

Mr. Patterson: Item 2.(b). I am sorry, I thought we were on 2.(c).

If these items are passed, will it preclude any mention of the Consumers' Bureau affairs later on?

Mr. Connelly: I have no objection or concerns about coming back, and of course in Minister's Salary, there is always the opportunity. If the Member has missed something, even if there is a line that has been passed, I have no objection if you find something that you have to go back to it.

Mr. Chairman, is it permissible to have a smoke break, I mean, just a short break?

Mr. Chairman: Five minutes?

Mr. Connelly: No, three minutes.

Mr. Chairman: Three minutes.

RECESS

Mr. Chairman: Item 2.(c)—pass.

Resolution No. 21: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$908,300 for Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1990.

Shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Radisson.

Mr. Patterson: Is it referring just specifically to the Consumers' Bureau and not the Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs?

An Honourable Member: Yes, line 21. With a little 21 right beside it.

Mr. Chairman: Item 3. Corporate Affairs: Provides for the administration of such Acts as The Corporations Act, The Insurance Act, The Securities Act and The Public Utilities Board Act. Shall 3.(a)(1) pass—pass; 3.(a)(2) pass—pass.

3.(b)(1) pass—the Honourable Member for Concordia.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister: what is the impact study that the Insurance Branch has conducted on the potential divestiture of MPIC General Insurance Allowance?

Mr. Connelly: That does not fall under the responsibility of our department.

Mr. Doer: I take it, Mr. Chairman, that the Insurance Branch would provide the overview for all insurance in the province, or is it only for those matters under corporations?

Mr. Connelly: It covers all insurance, but our department is not involved in the divestiture of MPIC.

An Honourable Member: Get your hand off the mike.

Mr. Connelly: Oh, sorry.

* (1630)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, I am surprised the Minister did not want to be recorded, and I hope Hansard has been able to obtain the words of the Minister, notwithstanding his hand over the microphone. My question is: why has this branch not conducted any review of the possible insurance coverage in the province of the divestiture of the Public Insurance Corporation? Surely one would think that the No. 1 general insurance coverage company in the province, i.e., MPIC would affect the general policyholders in the province, and there would be an impact study on that. I am surprised the Minister cannot tell us what that impact is going to be.

Mr. Connelly: Well, I guess we would like the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) to elaborate a little bit on just what he is getting on. The divestiture of MPIC is not a part of our department, and would not be involved. We are involved in the regulation of insurance companies, not in the divestiture. If he has some other specific questions then maybe we can answer them.

Mr. Doer: My question to the Minister is: has there been any impact study by his department on those Manitobans that have not been able to get insurance coverage from any other company besides MPIC? I know the Member for Gladstone, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson), raised questions in the House and followed up with correspondence when we were in Government from groups that could not get insurance coverage.

My question to the Minister is: has there been any study to see if there is any holes potentially for Manitobans in the coverage with the potential sale of this corporation that the present Government is now embarking upon? I guess my questions is: does the right hand know what the other right hand is doing in the coverage of Manitobans in insurance?

Mr. Connelly: Mr. Chairman, we are not advised of any lack of coverage or any anticipated lack of coverage that would come about by the divestiture of MPIC and the general insurance. It is not our department's purview to be involved in the divestiture, as he knows very well. There is a Minister responsible for that department. Ours is to the regulation of insurance companies.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Chairman, my question to the Minister is, does this branch ensure certain standards of insurance across the province?

Mr. Connelly: We definitely are involved in standards. There are several different things, solvency is one of them, but what standards is the Member looking for? If he would be more specific we could maybe answer

the questions for the concerns that he has, if he has specific concerns.

Mr. Doer: So the Minister answered that this branch is responsible for standards for insurance for Manitobans. My question to the Minister is: if the branch is responsible for standards, and if the Government is proceeding with the divestiture, I understand the Minister responsible for the Crown corporation has the responsibility for the divestiture. My question to the Minister is: why is there not an impact study of that divestiture on the citizens of Manitoba in terms of the standards that they receive in their insurance coverage based on the Public Insurance Corporation as one of the competitors in the market?

Mr. Connery: Mr. Chairman, I think all of the products that are required by the consumer that may be sold by MPIC are available in whatever form from other companies. It is the role of the insurance branch to ensure that they follow the legislation and procedures. There is solvency, there are other procedures and regulations that have to be in place to ensure that the consumer is protected in buying insurance. As the Member knows, the non-life, the accident insurance sector now has a comp plan in place and we are looking at the same thing in life insurance, in case of insolvency, to protect the consumer. The divestiture is not part of the responsibility of our department. Our department is to ensure that all insurance companies, whether it be MPIC or whatever, follow the rules and regulations.

Mr. Doer: Can the Minister then assure Manitobans that no Manitoban who is presently covered by MPIC will not be denied the opportunity to purchase insurance in a competitor's operation, if MPIC is indeed divested, and no Manitoban will be out of the ability to purchase insurance? Can the Minister give us this guarantee in the House that he as the Minister responsible for the insurance branch of the Government can give the assurance to Manitobans that they will not be denied the opportunity to purchase insurance with the divestiture of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation?

Mr. Connery: Well, that would be under the terms of sale that the MPIC would be sold for. It is not the role of us to make it mandatory that certain specific services are available. Ours is the role of a moderator to ensure that services are provided in a fair and equitable manner and to protect the purchaser of insurance policies.

Mr. Doer: Surely standards would include the ability to purchase coverage. In his role not as an advocate for the sale of the corporation but as a monitoring body and a protector for those people in Manitoba who have the opportunity to purchase insurance, surely the Minister, not in an advocacy role but as in a refereeing role can tell us whether situations which developed before—I remember the Member for Gladstone when she was critic, now Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson), raised situations where companies could not purchase insurance and we had to go to MPIC as the insurer of last resort—surely he can give us the guarantee that on the one hand they are not selling

an insurance company, a publicly owned insurance company, on the other hand that will not deny Manitobans the opportunity to purchase coverage. It is obviously not going to be part of a long-term divestiture sale, so I am just asking the Minister whether in fact he can give us that guarantee today in the House.

Mr. Connery: There can be no guarantee, I do not think, Mr. Chairman, that everyone who wants a policy under any or all conditions will be guaranteed a policy.

When the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) was in Government I remember a concern from a particular group of people who wanted coverage and were refused by MPIC. They came to me complaining that they could not get adequate coverage for the facility they wanted to cover. I guess what it really means is that if there is a hazard or an exposure that nobody wants to cover or feels that it is not an appropriate one, then there is no guarantee in any province in Canada that regardless of the circumstances somebody can get coverage. It was, when the Member for Concordia was in Government, that MPIC did refuse the coverage that an individual wanted. The Member shakes his head but it is in true fact.

Mr. Doer: It is obvious that the Government has not chosen to direct the department to do an impact study. I asked whether there had been any review of that, so it is obviously it has not taken place. Has the insurance branch reviewed any of the changes in Workplace, Safety and Health provisions, the cancer-causing material at the workplace, of what impact that will have on the insurance ratepayers of Manitoba with the changing, the rolling back of the exposure levels of cancer-causing goods at the workplace? Is there any co-ordination between the Government, on the one hand again, in changing the regulations. I know the Minister was involved as a former Minister to change those regulations, the cancer-causing regulations of the workplace. Has the insurance branch judged whether there has been any change in the insurance rates because of it?

* (1640)

Mr. Connery: There is no mandate to do a rate review. The Member full well knows that people in the workplace who get sick or are injured in the workplace are covered by Workers Compensation. If he wants to have more information on insurance in the workplace then that would be an appropriate time, under the Workers Compensation, and I would be quite happy to answer them. We are very concerned, when we get to the Workers Compensation sector that, yes, illnesses in the workplace are of a concern and we have just discussed it within the last week that are we looking at what can happen as far as illnesses in the workplace.

First of all, what we would like to see is that we do not get caught with some illnesses that we are not aware of; and secondly, are we covered for the cost if we are not aware. So my first concern was when it came to workers that we try to prevent illnesses happening. We do not want to be somewhere down the road, 15, 20 years from now, covering a lot of

workers because they are now ill and their life expectancy shortened because we did not know what we were doing in the workplace.

My first concern is that we try to diagnose and to ensure that people do not get ill in the workplace, but if that happens then that is a Workers Compensation issue, it is not the mandate of the insurance division.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Chairman, the changes also affected the environmental issues as well, but we can go after that at some later point.

Mr. Chairman, the mid-'80s featured a tremendous increase in the cost of liability insurance for a number of public enterprises: certain parts of schools, swimming pools, recreational and playgrounds, other tourist operations, a tremendous increase in the liability insurance and some businesses could no longer even continue.

I am wondering whether the Government has conducted any studies in light of those impacts in the mid-'80s, and does the Government expect any further changes that would affect the quality of life of Manitobans?

Mr. Connery: Mr. Chairman, in the mid-'80s there was a pooling arrangement looked at that the department viewed with the problems of the high liability. I do not know if that was just a glitch or whether it is going to come back. It seems to have settled down at this point. We do not have the concerns raised to the department about people not being able to get liability insurance to any degree. It is not a concern that is raised with the department and if there were a lot of people out there not being able to get liability insurance I am sure we would be the first to hear about it and, if we were, we would take a second look. But, once again, I guess the Government cannot assure everybody that they will get an insurance policy because they require one. We are concerned that people get coverage if it is required.

The pooling arrangement was looked at, as in Ontario, they had a pooling arrangement, but times changed and it was not necessary so at this point, there is nothing in place, but if there was another glitch like there was in the mid-'80s, we will do whatever reviews and maybe take whatever action is required.

Mr. Doer: The Minister mentioned glitch. What were the statistical increases in liability insurance through that period of time? If I recall, it was '85-86 and now the numbers should be in a couple of years later in terms of the impact of those rate increases. Were they substantial, is it a glitch, were they significant increases, what was the impact, particularly on what I would call non-profit operations? I can recall swimming pools, public swimming pools, I recall some skating rinks, I remember boating, renting boating operations, I remember a riding stable in Gladstone area, and I remember a lot of individual examples where communities suffered, their quality of life suffered because there was less access due to higher liability insurance.

I guess my question is, and it is a very non-partisan question unlike most of my others, has there been a

real impact study on that, what can we learn from it, and if there has not, can we look at further study so that we can anticipate a kind of pro-active alternative if it ever develops in the future again?

Mr. Connery: The department tells me that the increases have been all over the place. There have been some that have gone up significantly where others are even maybe lower than what they were prior to that significant increase in the mid-'80s, so it is all over the place. We do not have any statistics as to what they are.

We will watch it in a pro-active vein, but we are not getting the complaints from people to indicate that there is a concern in the marketplace for it—have we had any complaints in the recent while? So, no complaints have come forward where people were not able to get liability insurance. I know in the mid-'80s there was quite a clamour. There were some deficiencies, and some people that really could not get it for a while, but it seems that has died down and maybe some of the settlements were excessive. I do not know, but that was part of it where all of a sudden liability claims went through the ceiling, and that is where the higher premiums came from, but we are not experiencing a problem with it. Our superintendent is watching it and if there are some concerns raised then we will deal with it at that time.

Mr. Doer: A couple of last questions here dealing with the Insurance Branch: are all policies now in Manitoba sold in the province sold in such a way that it is consistent with the Charter of Rights in sexual equality?

Mr. Connery: We are not aware of any infractions. If there are or the Member has any, we would be pleased to look at them, but we are not aware and none have been brought to our attention. If there are concerns, we are quite prepared to deal with them.

Mr. Doer: So the Minister is saying, as a standard, that all sales of policies dealing with life insurance are presently, in the province, neutral on a sexual basis for purposes of calculations.

Mr. Connery: We are not aware that they are not. If there are specific concerns, then we would be quite prepared to deal with them, but there have been no complaints raised and we are not aware. If the Member has some specific points, we would be very pleased to hear from them and deal with them, and get back to him.

Mr. Doer: Are there any problems with geographic designations in the province in terms of insurance on the basis of geography that the Minister is aware of?

Mr. Connery: There are no specific problems. The Member well knows, by the location, our facility in Portage la Prairie, a large vegetable storage shed which is outside of the water protection or of the City of Portage la Prairie will be a higher rate. There are different varying rates for the risk or the exposure that the company is put to. We are not aware of any reasons

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that they are higher in an area with the same exposure or the same risk level.

Mr. Doer: Is the Chair of the Securities Commission still in a combined job with the Chair of the Manitoba PUB, the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Connelly: That was split off. We have a part-time Chairman for the Securities Commission. Mr. Derwood Walker is the Chairman of the Securities Commission, and we have a full-time Chairman of the PUB, who is Mr. Ed Robertson.

* (1650)

Mr. Doer: Sure, contrary to the former comments of the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), the now Minister of Health, all of these gentlemen are, of course, non-partisan meritorious appointments, and I noticed - (interjection)- that is right. The Minister mentions from his seat, "great people." I would point out that sometimes in Opposition it is so easy to accuse a Government of appointing "partisan people" to particularly sensitive jobs when in fact they are meritorious. A one-day headline, I think, smears unnecessarily the character and ability of individuals.

I just note and I recall with the appointment of the Chair of the PUB, Mr. Robertson, who is a long-time public employee in Ontario and Manitoba, to comments from the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) were in my opinion unjust, unfair, and what I would call beneath the level of fair political comment for people who are working for Manitobans.

Moving on to the Securities Commission, the Minister mentioned the job is part time. Would the Minister please advise the House how many hours per week that job would entail?

Mr. Connelly: It is in the area of two to three days a week.

Mr. Doer: As I recall correctly, Murray Peden was the former head of the Securities Commission. Was that job full time at that point?

Mr. Connelly: Yes, he was full time, but there was a part-time vice-chairman.

We are also reviewing the needs of the Securities Commission. In fact, I had discussions with Mr. Walker as to the workload and what would transpire some time in the future or the near future, whether this would require full time or not. We are having a look at it. If the needs are full time, we will definitely make that the requirement.

We have Tom Tapley, who is a full-time vice-chairman—or Tom Tapley was the director, and we are just in the process now of filling that director's position. So while we just flipped the vice-chairman and the chairman in the sense, one full time, part time, we have just flipped them over and are bringing in a director which will be in place, hopefully within the new year. That process has been under way for some time.

Mr. Doer: My question to the Minister is: how often would there be allegations of insider trading in

Manitoba, and has there been any ongoing investigations in that regard in the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Connelly: I am informed it was about four years ago, the last insider trading. It has not been a problem where, I am informed, that it is more on a national scale—does not usually transpire within our provincial jurisdiction. That does not mean that we are not on constant watch for it, but four years ago was the last one.

Mr. Doer: Has there been any review by the Manitoba Securities Commission for people trading on the Vancouver Stock Exchange with all the—and I am just going by media reports? The market responded obviously in a certain way, as the market will, but there were certain media comments about the penny stock situation on the Vancouver Stock Exchange. Has there been any review on behalf of Manitobans that are investing in that situation? What are Manitobans to believe is the truth as opposed to what is sometimes reported in the way in the media?

Mr. Connelly: It is not under the purview of our department to investigate the Vancouver Stock Market, per se, but I am told that our people are in constant touch with other provinces wherever there is a stock market, so that if there are concerns raised there we do it. My opening remarks were that we have a very good exchange of information on the Prairies and in fact all of Canada where there is a good dialogue, so that as things may arise in one jurisdiction that other jurisdictions are informed so that we can prevent whatever scams that might be taking place.

Mr. Doer: Am I to assume then that given the fact that our provincial sector is involved with other stock exchanges—markets in other provinces in Canada, that some of the initial fears that were expressed about the Vancouver Stock Exchange are not those which our Securities Commission would verify?

Mr. Connelly: Basically, the people who are dealing on the Toronto Stock Market are not in Manitoba so we do not have jurisdiction over those. We are not having our local people selling or buying on the Toronto Stock. I guess as the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) said, those are false fears that really they are not those fears, but there is always a concern.

In the securities, of course, anywhere there is money involved there is always somebody that is out there maybe trying to make a fast dollar. If the Member knows of any, we would sure like to solicit his information to put a stop to any scams that could take place. A lot of the securities are not cleared in Manitoba, they are cleared in other jurisdictions. I solicit any information they might have if there is anything going on.

Mr. Doer: My advice to the Minister is do not sign any blank cheques, but we have given that advice to the Minister before.—(interjection)- I do not know, the only Securities Commission in Canada that can have a Minister that stands up in the Legislature and says,

oh, I signed a bunch of blank cheques. I guess that was only meant to be given in a Friendly Manitoba manner.

My question to the Minister, the level of investment in the Manitoba security situation in the Winnipeg Commodity Market and the Stock Market in this province, has it risen or decreased over the last measurable 12 months?

Mr. Connery: We are following the national trend, but in the annual report the Member would see some of the trends in prospectus and whatever is happening. There are a lot of statistics in the annual report that the Member could refer to.

I guess the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) has never got involved, never signing a blank cheque, because he has never got involved with organizations where there are two signees, such as a community club or anything like that. It is a great experience to work with other people and I would suggest that maybe he might like to get involved in signing a cheque on behalf of a good community. I am quite proud of what I have done.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, no, I would not advise Members to sign blank cheques normally and that would be my free advice of the day.

My final question to the Minister is, we are seeing a tremendous decrease in employment in almost every sector in this province. Can the Minister tell us, in the investment area, has there been an increase or decrease in employment in Manitoba in this sector of our economy?

* (1700)

Mr. Chairman: The hour being 5 p.m. and time for Private Members' Hour, committee rise and call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS PUBLIC BILLS

BILL NO. 2—THE LANDLORD AND TENANT AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill No. 2, The Landlord and Tenant Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le louage d'immeubles, standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing?
(Agreed)

COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. William Chornopyski (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch), that the report of the committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

BILL NO. 4—THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), Bill No. 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route, standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing?
(Agreed)

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could make some comments on Bill No. 4 and leave it standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker: It has already been agreed to. The Honourable Member for Gimli.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to debate this Bill and put my comments on the record regarding Bill No. 4. I think the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) who introduced it certainly did not think this Bill out very clearly before he introduced it.

Certainly in principle we should all keep our licences clean and legible so that the RCMP and other police departments can read the plates. It is just not practical in anybody's common sense, and it is against rural Manitoba. Anyone in rural Manitoba knows that you cannot drive on any gravel roads for any length of distance, you cannot go on any road at this time of the year where we have some snow—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Gimli.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that it is just not practical to keep a licence plate clean today in these kinds of conditions when streets are sloppy and wet from the salt and sand. Even in the City of Winnipeg it is just not practical to keep your licence plates clean at this time of the year.

You cannot even drive down the street. A couple of days ago, as an example, as I was going home, someone cut me off. I tried to get the licence plate, but it was dirty. Today you cannot go out on the street. It just gets splashed with the sand and salt. It is just not practical, it is just impossible to keep your plates clean.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, point of order. I heard the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) call the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) ignorant and I think the Member for Assiniboia would want to retract that. It is not very becoming, because I think this is a very, very intelligent speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), on the same point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe you will find that phrase unparliamentary, and I do not think it was used in the unparliamentary fashion.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Assiniboia.- (inaudible)-

The word is not unparliamentary. It is not very courteous, mind you, and I would ask Honourable Members who want more time to pick and choose your words carefully.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I was also going to mention, I think the licence plates we have to keep them as legible as possible. I think that is correct, but I think five years is actually too long to keep a permanent plate, especially for rural areas where they get soiled and bent up, especially for half-ton trucks and farm trucks. There is one area where they should issue new licence plates every one or two years at least, because it is very difficult to be able to read these plates after they get bent up and one thing or another on farm trucks.

The Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) certainly did not think this Bill through very closely, because it is just impossible to enforce this kind of regulation about clean licence plates. He should have certainly spoken to the RCMP or got some advice from the police department, from the RCMP, to try to come up with a much better resolution than this.- (interjection)- Yes, but this is just not possible, it is just not practicable, Mr. Speaker. Then again, it is really slanted against rural Manitoba, and I think this is one of the worst things about this Bill and—

An Honourable Member: It is against rural Manitoba and the North.

* (1710)

Mr. Helwer: Certainly, and the North—that is right—the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) says, and that is correct. That is where they have snow on the roads, and you can only drive probably one mile and then your licence plate is covered with snow and you cannot see. How is any police department, anybody ever going to enforce something of that nature?

I just want to mention, on the bottom of the licence plate we have a slogan "Friendly Manitoba," and I think this is just a terrific way for us to advertise and promote

the way the people of Manitoba really are. They are friendly in Manitoba, and I think it is unfortunate in some cases where they have the steel frame around the licence plate that covers up the "Friendly Manitoba." Basically I think that is an excellent slogan, and I hope our Minister certainly continues with this slogan of "Friendly Manitoba," because it is an excellent way to promote our good will here in Manitoba.

I guess the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), I do not know what he was thinking of when he brought forward this resolution, because he actually has some rural areas out in Assiniboia. They have gravel roads out there, and I am sure they do not plow the snow off and sweep the snow off of their roads every day. I do not know how he can—

An Honourable Member: You have to live in the real world.

Mr. Helwer: That is right. I mean, every constituency is the same and his is especially, being rural.

Mr. Speaker, when this Bill was introduced, he did not think this out at all, because there is no mention in this Bill at all of any penalties. Is it going to be \$5, \$10, \$100.00? What is a logical fine? Our police department have much more important things to do than go around the country looking for dirty licence plates, and especially when it is not a very extensive fine.

I think the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) really should think this Bill through and avoid the embarrassment he has already had on this. I think he should withdraw it just as soon as possible so it clears the record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, it would be my desire to speak on Bill No. 4. I realize it is standing in the name of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and I am sure that he wants to contribute to the debate as well.

Mr. Speaker, I was sort of surprised when I saw Bill No. 4 appear on the Order Paper and had a chance to read that Bill, and I am wondering why the Bill has been brought forward. It is a very plain and simple Bill. In the 12-some-odd years that I have been in the Legislature, I have seen various interesting Bills come forward. This probably is one they will find very intriguing.

I would like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that at the present time under The Highway Traffic Act, there is provision in there, in the legislation, that indicates that numbers are supposed to be legible. I would want to indicate at this stage of the game that it would not be my intention to support this legislation. I want to clarify that to some degree.

Members have brought forward various views in terms of the impact of something like that. Every year we have a Highway Traffic Amendment Act coming forward to this Assembly here where the department goes through all the things in the department that are a matter of concern that should be corrected.

That is why we have the—it is sort of a general Bill, and we have another one coming this year again. It is

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Bill No.74. We are just completing the final details of it and that addresses all the various concerns that we have experienced during the course of the year where we have to make changes.

When I went back to the department and showed them Bill No. 4, and I said, why if something like this has come forward, why have we not brought it forward? They said, well, there is something in place right now that makes it compulsory to have your numbers legible. I said, well, what is the difference then? They indicate to me, where it says that the numbers, letters, and validation stickers thereon at all times shall be plainly visible. That is what is proposed in here.

Now, I said, well, do we not have that? They indicate that the legislation we have in place right now is adequate, that no major concern has been expressed. Certainly the Member has indicated that he has gone to the authorities. I got the impression that they had supported this kind of a legislation. I am very surprised if that is the case because my department under Dan Coyle is constantly in contact with the authorities. If there was any concern, I am sure it would have been addressed a long time ago.

I think this legislation as has been already indicated by my colleagues, many who have spoken, is I think not enforceable. It would create great difficulty. Some of the old colleagues that have been in the Legislature for many years, and I want to refer to my colleague from Lakeside who very often has used the expression in this House, "If you cannot make good legislation, do not bring it forward." If it is not properly enforceable, he calls it "phony legislation," because if you bring forward legislation and we can pass it here; but if it is not properly enforceable, then it is not worthwhile applying it. That is the kind of legislation we have here, because this legislation would be very unenforceable. It says specifically—and I looked at this very carefully. That means that the validation sticker, and the bottom end of it, everything is supposed to be legible.

The other problem it would create to some degree is the fact that—the reason why we have only one licence plate, and I want to go into that a little bit, is because the previous administration in their wisdom saw fit to cut back in the Highways Department over a period of years, reducing it each year. The staff would come forward in their attempt to try and keep the budget for highway construction up, came forward with alternatives and options in terms of where they could cut back to try and save some money for the Government. As a result, that is what happened with the licence plates, where we got cut from two licence plates to one.

That is a matter of major concern that we have, and what we are looking at, at the present time, and this is the reason why I would not support this legislation. We are looking at the possibility of going back to two licence plates. The reason that it was cut off, back as I indicated before, was strictly because of the cost factor. We are looking at the possibility. I will certainly be bringing it forward to go back to the aspects of two licence plates.

If you look at licence plates at the present time, as you drive down the highway and look at traffic coming

at you, you see a variety of junk like you would not believe—some have none, some have Manitoba plates, some have Ontario plates, and part of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act that is coming forward will make it illegal to use other plates from other provinces because that creates a problem. You look at a car that is coming at you, it says Saskatchewan on there, and you look on the back and it is Manitoba. Some guys get real cute and they bring plates from the States and put them on the front. You think you have an American tourist there and on the back they have Manitoba plates. Then you have all the varieties of advertising that takes place on these plates.

* (1720)

I think it is not conducive to good driving habits. I do not think it is something that is appealing to the general public. You have all kinds of slogans on there and what have you, and I personally have to indicate that I would endorse going back to the two licence plate system. I think that is a very general thing and, as I indicated before, I know it is a cost factor, but I, personally, if it costs two or three dollars more on my licence plates to have two plates, I could certainly support that. I do not think it would be a major impact in terms of economics on most people, and I think it would be a much dressier thing.

I think Manitobans, when they travel in other provinces, would be proud if they could have it back, if we had a nice, proper plate. I think in fact that we had over a period of years, once we had on our plates there was 10,000 lakes and now we have Friendly Manitoba. I think it lends itself to something.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity the other day with my staff to review plates from all across the States as well as the ones that we have in Canada, and there are some very interesting plates in there, very nice plates, beautiful ones. I think it is part of it, the tourism aspect of it. I think it is something to do with pride in our province and I think that is important.

I just want to indicate, initially, when I said why is this kind of a Bill coming forward, normally practice in other years has been in my time here that if a private Member brought forward a Bill, it got introduced, it was debated that day and never saw the light of day again. Usually that was the practice because you could call it. The Government of the Day would stand the Bill. I am talking if an Opposition Member brought in a Bill, after the first round of debate it stood there and died on the Order Paper, and I have had a few of those. It is very seldom that one passes a Private Member's Bill in this House.

Then I looked at it and I said, man, what a Session we are having. We have something like 86 Bills on the Order Paper right now. Almost 20 of them, Mr. Speaker, are Bills brought forward by the Opposition Parties. It looks like there is an immense legislative package. I really think that I regard this as a bit of a nuisance Bill. Really, I did the count. I think there are something like 17 or 18 Private Members' Bills, and certainly the time in this, we should be allowed to debate whatever we want, I suppose. But remember, this is Private

Members' Hour and I do not want to take away from that, but I think there are many, many issues that are much more important than worrying about whether we can see the validation sticker at all times.

As I indicated before, I think it is legislation that is unenforceable. It is nuisance legislation as far as I am concerned and though we are debating it, I feel that we could spend our time wiser doing other things. If it is a matter of major concern, Mr. Speaker, I want to just repeat again that I would have expected that my department, under The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, would have brought it forward time and time again. This has not been the case and I do not feel supportive of this legislation. Thank you.

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): It is certainly not a great pleasure to rise on this matter.-(interjection)- The Honourable Leader of the third Party in this House said it is not a pleasure to listen to me. Well, the feeling is mutual. There are times when one sits here and wonders whether the rhetoric that is espoused from the corner of the lower benches is in fact real or is somewhat demonstrative sometime of the ability in order to think properly about the issues that are in fact being discussed, or rather, how serious the issues are.

Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat with trepidation that I rise to address this Bill because of the way that it has been presented and the seriousness with which a Bill such as this can only be put forward. Those of us that have travelled this province far and wide, backwards and forwards realize that the maze of concrete streets that exist in the City of Winnipeg simply do not exist in many parts of our province. Therefore, maybe what we should be doing is standing here debating whether in fact we should be spending the energies of this House and the amounts of monies that it takes to run this place, and using them to construct, probably, proper roadways in those parts of rural Manitoba that are simply not able to enjoy the amenities that are afforded to some of the urban communities at this time.

It is again, Mr. Speaker, important to know that those communities out there, and the people living within those communities, have a great and difficult time in assuring that the numbers affixed to vehicles that demonstrate ownership of a certain vehicle be maintained in such a way that they are readable at all times. I would suggest to the Member that has put forth this Bill that he should in fact take a ride with me some day out into rural Manitoba, especially on a rainy day, and wonder how often he would have to stop to in fact wash the licence plates on his car in order to meet the very request of this Bill.

I would suggest to him that maybe what he should be doing, or what he should suggest in the Bill, is devising some mechanism that could be attached to cars that would automatically wash licence plates every time we hit a puddle, or hit a mud road and we are forced to drive on these.

Mr. Speaker, I think the discussion around this Bill has demonstrated very clearly the seriousness with which the Liberal Party is addressing the debates and

the issues that are important to Manitobans. The waste of time in addressing the real issues that I have seen here is simply, for a new Member, hard to understand at times.

I would suggest to the Member and the Liberal Party, before they would allow one of their Members to put forward an Act such as this, a Bill such as this, that they might consider in fact that this would make, and is making a mockery of the debates in this House and the issues that we should really be debating in this House. I believe that the people of Manitoba will judge rather harshly with those that have abused these Chambers with these sorts of Bills.

I would suggest that if the Member would want to do the Province of Manitoba a real favour he would stand up in these Chambers and withdraw this Bill, saying, and apologize to this Chamber for putting forward this kind of abusive material.

People in my part of the province, for instance, have to travel daily on gravel or dirt roads and are forced, whether they want to or not, to abuse their vehicles, and we are simply not able to buy white Lincoln Continentals because the gravel would rip the white paint right off the sides of it. It would destroy the very paint and the beauty of the vehicle, and the chrome would shatter and fall off the sides of the car.

However, the people of Manitoba, especially of rural Manitoba, would like to indicate to the Liberal Party today that there are ways and means of identifying clearly and making sure that vehicles are identified, other than by forcing people to stop every 500 feet on a muddy or a rainy day to wash their licence plate. There are other ways.

I would suggest that if the Honourable Member from the Liberal Party would put his mind, and I know that he has been thinking, I know he was thinking—

An Honourable Member: When?

Mr. Penner: The question was asked, when? That is the question, that really is the question, when, is we all ask ourselves. But he does think at times, I am sure, because it must have taken a tremendous amount of his energy to draft something as valuable as this Bill, and then to have the nerve to walk into the Chamber and ask the Speaker of the House and the Clerk of the House to put this forward for consideration in this Chamber.

* (1730)

An Honourable Member: His whole caucus must have approved it.

Mr. Penner: The Honourable Member says that his whole caucus must have approved it. Well, certainly. I know the Leader of the Opposition well enough that she would not have dared or that the Member across the way would not have dared put forward a Bill such as this without the concurrence of their Leader.

I suppose the question is then, how serious is the Leader of the Opposition in getting on with the important

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issues before the people of Manitoba that are important: child care, the economics of this situation, the economics of Manitoba, the economic situation that exists in rural Manitoba today, the decline in our farm populations. Those are the kind of things we should be debating and that is what the Liberal Party should be addressing itself to instead of affixing their attentions to this sort of rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to stand here a long time and waste the people of Manitoba's time, the valuable time that has been allotted to make sure that in Private Members' Hour we can bring forward the issues that are of utmost importance to those that sit on the opposite side of Government.

I would suggest to the Liberal Party that if they want to at all impress the people in the rural parts of Manitoba that maybe they would want to consider putting forward a resolution that would address in another way identifying vehicles on the road than washing mud off of the licence plates every 500 feet.

I would suggest that they might, in fact, want to consider an amendment to this Bill, suggesting maybe that we all stop driving cars when it is muddy, that we declare a national or a provincial holiday every time it rains to keep the cars off the street. Maybe we could even go as far and suggest that we might amend this Bill and suggest that before we pave every street and every road in this province, we will not allow vehicle traffic on those roads any more for danger and fear of dirtying the licence plate and not being able to identify clearly the vehicles that travel on these roads and therefore breaking the laws of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the House, again, in a very meaningful manner, and I would plead with the Honourable Member to consider that he would withdraw this Bill, and therefore get on with the real business of this House.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me just a few moments to express my extreme frustrations with the Liberal Party for using this and abusing as an abusive vehicle, the time of this House.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I, today, would like to offer congratulations to the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake). I really think congratulations are in order in getting this Bill to the floor of the Assembly, because it happens to be, I think, one of the few times during the Session that a Member of the Liberal Opposition has actually brought to the floor of this House something which is in provincial jurisdiction and not within the area of federal responsibility. So it really is worthy of note—I said one of the few issues that the Liberal Party has actually brought to this House, which is within the competence and jurisdiction of the Province of Manitoba, as opposed to their usual tirade of issues that are not within the jurisdiction of this Legislative Assembly. So, Mr. Speaker, on that particular note, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) must be congratulated.

I am rising today to join with my colleagues, and the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who speaks from

his seat has guessed well, to oppose this particular Bill for a variety of reasons. I think one is to firmly look at what this Bill does, the wording changes that it provides in The Highway Traffic Act to what is already there.

When one studies the current section of The Highway Traffic Act and its wording with respect to licence plates, it strikes one very quickly that what the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) is doing is a couple of things: (1) He is removing a comma after the word "dirt" in Section 6(8); he is adding an "s" to the word "number" and a comma, one assumes to be grammatically correct; and the words following "letters", and I quote: "letters" and "validation sticker". The word "thereon" is the same, and he changes a "may" to an "are." The original section that exists in The Highway Traffic Act that requires drivers to have their licence plates visible and unobstructed is virtually the same as this amendment, other than these few small changes, where he is adding numbers, letters and validation sticker.

Now when one assumes that you can interpret the number plates number to include the numbers and letters, that it is an identifying number, which can also include letters, then the addition of letters here is not appropriate. Unless he is referring to other letters on the plate, one would assume the identification of "Manitoba, Friendly Manitoba" and of course the validation sticker.

It was mentioned I believe in the speech of the Honourable Member for Assiniboia that one of his concerns or concern by some of the Members of his Party is that the term "Friendly Manitoba" should not be obstructed by some of these attachments that you can provide to a licence plate, whether it be "Steinbach, it's worth the trip" dealership sticker or others.

Mr. Speaker, I believe as long as the licence plate can be identified as a Manitoba plate with the appropriate letters and numbers, and if the Steinbach cover that goes on a licence plate covers up the "Friendly Manitoba" part of it, it makes it a little more difficult to read. I know of no case that has ever been brought to my attention, and perhaps Members of the Liberal Opposition could enlighten the House in some of their speeches on this Bill as to cases, if they are out there, where that particular attachment to a licence plate has caused a problem.

If it is simply that the use of an advertising instrument around a licence plate offends the Member for Assiniboia, then I do not think that is a justifiable reason to deny anyone the use of that type of instrument.

If there are reasons, very valid reasons, where those type of coverings have caused distress to peace officers or where they have made it impossible to identify a licence plate, I would like the Member or his colleagues to bring forward those examples to this House. They would be a very convincing argument to Members on this side and other Members, if those kind of cases could be brought forward. Personally I have never heard of those problems, no RCMP officer in my constituency has raised that as a matter of concern, and I would suggest that the Member for Assiniboia would have a difficult time in finding those particular examples.

The Member for Assiniboia certainly means well, and I would agree with the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), who speaks from his seat, certainly means well in wanting to ensure that licence plates are unencumbered and as clean as possible. The current Highway Traffic Act provides for that, but one has to be obviously reasonable and I think that current provision of the Act is not only adequate, but has been properly enforced.

* (1740)

Some of my colleagues have spoken about dirty licence plates and the difficulties of driving in a climate like Manitoba's with dust and stone and, indeed, in Winnipeg at certain times of the year when we have slush, water and muck it does not take very long for a licence plate to be covered in dirt and difficult to see. I am sure the police enforce that in that provision in a reasonable manner depending on the conditions, and one could assume if this provision were to become law that it would also be enforced reasonably.

Just to bring in this particular provision for the purpose of—and I believe this is the intent of the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake)—to do away with those types of licence plate covers that have been used. I cannot go along with that, Mr. Speaker. I think there certainly has not been a sufficient need demonstrated by Members of the Opposition to convince the other Members of this House there is, in fact, a need for this type of amendment.

I challenge, today, the Members of the Liberal Party, the colleagues of the Member for Assiniboia, who has already spoken and of course cannot further enlighten the House with these examples, to come forward today, or at another occasion on Private Members' Hour and bring forward those examples. In fact, I even extend my challenge to the Member for Assiniboia to raise, with me privately, those types of examples where the licence plate covers have been a hindrance, or caused difficulty to our peace officers, or those who need to identify licence plates.

If he is able to provide that information those examples, and maybe not just one obscure case but a number of examples, to strengthen his argument, in this case, I, as a private Member of this House, would be more than willing to look at those examples and perhaps change my opinion on this Bill if he can demonstrate that to me, privately or in this House. I have yet to see that kind of argument. I have yet to see those kind of examples, and as a consequence I am not able to support this particular piece of legislation.

So I leave that challenge with the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), and I thank him on behalf of the Members of this side for putting a matter on the floor of this Assembly, which is within the area of provincial jurisdiction, which is certainly a very different approach from the other Members of his Party, a variation from the usual course of the Members of his Party to deal largely with federal issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: It indeed does give me pleasure to speak to my colleague's, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), Bill that he has put before this House.

I must admit that I am somewhat surprised and amazed the remarks I heard from the Government benches and the third Party's comments that they have been putting on the record.

Maybe we can go through a few of them. The Member for Rhineland (Mr. Penner), first, in his speech today made reference that he is surprised that their caucus let this Bill go through and be introduced to this Chamber. Well, maybe I should remind, not only the Member for Rhineland, but all Members of this Chamber that this is Private Members' Hour, that you, as a private Member, do not need your caucus approval to introduce a Bill.—(interjection)—Everything will come in time, trust me. Just sit back, be patient, and you will hear my position on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Member also referred to the abusing of rules and the wasting of time and so forth in regard to this Bill. I think we only need to look at the Government's record of abusing legislative time and abusing the rules. I think we could cite examples, everything from walking out of committees to having a motion to end this particular Private Members' Hour.

The Bill itself, or the Bill previously, or the Bill or the law that is now in place states that the number plates shall be kept free from dirt, and shall be so affixed and maintained that number thereon may, at all times, be plainly visible and clearly legible, and that the view thereof shall not be obscured or obstructed. When that piece of legislation was originally drafted I do not think they took into account the need to also include in there the letters. I see nothing wrong with it.

In fact, I used to work at a self-serve gas station. During the night times, when we had plates that were obscured that we were not able to read, we had to go outside and try and get it, because we had to write down, because we had what we refer to as drive-offs. If you are unable to read that back plate, and especially if it was, maybe, the type of a person that you might not want to go outside, you are put in a position in which you do have to go outside and take—(interjection)—well, the Attorney General said there is a conflict of interest. I do not see how he sees a conflict of interest in it. I think it is a sincere belief I have, that there are advantages of having clean licence plates.

Mr. Speaker, they continuously make reference to the fact—and the Minister of Sport (Mr. Ernst) I believe said it, or seemed to bevel on the point that—well, what type of a fine would you give if it is one speck of dirt, or two specks of dirt, or if it is completely dirty? What type of fine will you levy against the driver of the car or the owner of the plate?

The current legislation does not stipulate a fine. I would argue then, what type of a fine are you currently giving? Would not the same type of common sense apply to a fine of that nature, whether it applies just to the numbers or the numbers and the letters?

I was a bit surprised that the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) said this is one piece of legislation that the official Opposition has brought into the House, or into the Chamber, that is under provincial jurisdiction. I think if the Member looks at other pieces of legislation he will find that is not correct.

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

Mr. Praznik: I did not indicate to this House that it was one piece of legislation, I said "issue," Mr. Speaker.—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if it is one issue then, by far, he is dead wrong on that. There are numerous issues.

The Member for Lac du Bonnet did say one good point I thought he spoke quite well on this Bill, in that he said you have to use a reasonable manner. I believe that common sense, reasonable manner, call it what you will, but in my opinion there are many people who travel our highways and travel our city streets. If they are going one or two miles above the speed limit the police and the RCMP do not necessarily pull you over and give you a ticket for going one or two kilometres over the speed limit.

I believe, our police forces, our law enforcement offices are very responsible. If it is raining and there is mud and so forth, and someone has a plate that is illegible because of a possible rain storm or muddy road, whatever it might be, they are not going to be pulling over people like the Members of the third Party and the Government like to stress. In fact, I think it really serves the comments that they have put on the record in that respect, really serves an injustice to our law enforcement people, because they do treat the —(interjection)— laws very reasonable.

The Leader of the third Party said we pass a law and we enforce it. Well, we pass speeding laws too, and I do not think every speeding law is enforced if someone is going 101 kilometres an hour on a 100 kilometre an hour highway. At least maybe the Leader of the third Party can show me someone who has received a ticket.

I would argue, well, I think you will, some people do exceed—and I will even admit, Mr. Speaker, I myself might be going 101 kilometres an hour. I can recall going by radar, and I did not get a ticket. So if the Member from the third Party, who I would argue also could—

An Honourable Member: Do you ever drink and drive?

Mr. Lamoureux: No, I do not drink and drive. I am one of those non-drinkers.

* (1750)

An Honourable Member: The Member for Concordia says he smokes marijuana.

Mr. Lamoureux: Is that right? That is disappointing to hear if that is the case, but we will leave it at that.

Really what I am trying to say on this Bill is the intent of the Member for Assiniboia's (Mr. Mandrake) piece of legislation, I believe, is very good and sincere. It is a positive amendment, and if there are aspects of it that the Government cannot support let it go to committee, and if you do not want to see the licence plate logos then move an amendment. I am sure the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), and I know I would and our Party, would be receptive to hearing positive amendments, just like I am sure that the Government is receptive. Well, I like to believe they are receptive to hearing positive amendments.

Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions, both the third Party and the Government have said we are anti-rural. I think there are organizations out in the rural area that would support this particular Bill, organizations such as the Rural Crime Watch. Ordinary citizens in the rural area, farmers and so forth, I am sure would like to be able to know if someone is pulling away from their yard, or whatever it might be. With crime rates, Neighbourhood Watch Programs and so forth everything plays —(interjection)— Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if you might be able to have the third Party be quiet.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Anyway, I am willing to try and attempt to talk over the Leader of the third Party (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) if they do not really want to be quiet.

The present Bill does not reflect any penalty for the licence plates which are defaced in any form. Therefore, why should this amendment address that particular issue? This is an issue that Government can address once a Bill of this nature is passed and —(interjection)— pardon me? Coming from a typical Yuppie socialist I could not define that word, a white-wine socialist.

Mr. Speaker, anyway I do not want to use up anymore time. I do support the Member for Assiniboia's Bill. I think he is being very sincere. At present the law says that the numbers have to be clear. I believe that the law should also state that the letters have to be clear. The Bill does not make an attempt to define, or make a definition in terms of the amount of dirt or specks and so forth, nor does the current piece of legislation make that attempt either.

I think the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) is just trying to bring forward an amendment that is needed, and no matter how much this Government tries to belittle the amendment it is a sincere attempt. I do support his effort, and I do support his Bill 100 percent. On that I will end.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped to speak on Bill No. 17 today, The Employment Standards Amendment Act, which is a very important Bill, but it seems like the afternoon has passed, so we

might as well complete the afternoon speaking on Bill No. 4.

There are many of the Members on this side of the House who have been referring to this Bill as the "Mark IV" Bill, and maybe it is because the Member for Assiniboia, who presented this Bill, has a Lincoln. I do not begrudge him. I wish I could afford to have a Lincoln, and someday I hope to have a Mark IV as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Members from this side of the House seem to be branding this Bill as an anti-rural Bill because of the fact that you have to clean your licence plates off. I believe that the Members should maybe take the opportunity to travel to northern Manitoba. If they want to see roads that are in such a condition that the licence plate will get dirty, then they should travel to northern Manitoba.

I guess one of the areas that where we are fortunate is in the wintertime when we travel on our icy roads, there is no dirt on those roads. They are nice clean roads and the pavement is down in very good condition, so there is no dirt on those roads. So we do not have that same difficulty when the winter roads are down. I have had the opportunity to travel some to many parts of my constituency where this Bill would be a detriment to the people who are travelling on that road because if it was made necessary for them to stop the car and keep the plates free of dirt at all times, then I know that when the people who are travelling in parts of my constituency to Easterville then they would have to be stopping quite often in order to keep the dirt off the roads—

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) who has submitted this Bill has taken the opportunity to travel some of the roads through northern Manitoba. I know he has gone through a part of northern Manitoba that is going to become part of The Pas constituency. I am referring to the communities of Norway House and Cross Lake, and I know that some of the worst conditions in roads in anywhere in northern Manitoba is in existence when you go into those communities.

I would hope that the Minister and the people who got up and spoke on this Bill would take the opportunity to go to northern Manitoba and drive on the roads of Cross Lake and Norway House, and you would see that it is deplorable conditions. I do not think anybody can appreciate it until they have taken the opportunity to travel on those roads. I would hope that the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) would take that into consideration when he is doling out his funds this year.

Instead of putting them all on No. 75, and I know that No. 75 is an important road, Mr. Speaker, and I would not deny all those tourists coming into Manitoba to have a four-lane highway. I think that they should take that into consideration, the deplorable conditions of some of those roads in northern Manitoba, and give us a little bit of that money that they are going to be giving to the—

An Honourable Member: You were in power for many years, why did you not get some of it?

Mr. Harapiak: I was doing my best. The Member for Kirkfield Park (Mrs. Hammond) says we were in power

for many years, why did we not get part of it? Well, we did make a lot of improvements for the time that we were in Government. I know that one of the roads that I helped do a lot of lobbying for in order to get it paved was the Easterville Road. When we were elected in 1981, there was pavement for 20 miles, and now there that stretch of 120 kilometres is now all paved.

I know that maybe the people from here would not appreciate it, but I can tell you that anybody that is travelling from the communities of Snow Lake, or Flin Flon, or Cranberry Portage, when they travel to Winnipeg and they can knock an hour and a half off their trip because they can now use Easterville Road rather than going via Swan River, I know that they are appreciative of the work that we did when we were in Government.

I would like to raise one other point now when I am talking about roads and work programs. I think that we were fairer than what this Government is when we distributed our funds. There was paving going on or road improvements going on in all parts of the province. We did not do our work program on the strength of the seats we held. We did do a lot of highway work in the constituencies that were held by Conservative Members as well.

I would hope that the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger), when he is going into his road program, will take that into consideration. He says he will, when he is looking at his work program. I know that the constituency of The Pas is going to be getting a lot of attention because of the fact that Repap is going to be moving a lot of trucks to The Pas itself. I hope that the Minister is not going to be putting that against the so-called quota for northern Manitoba, and those are the only roads that we get fixed up, No. 10 Highway to The Pas, between The Pas and Swan River.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is very sensitive about Repap, because he knows that it was brought up in the House today that the Community of Swan River was in the process of establishing a plant in Swan River which would have provided many more jobs than what are going to be provided under the present circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to The Highway Traffic Act Amendment, I know that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), when he brought this Bill forward, had good intentions. He wanted to get his name up as having presented a Bill. I know that it has been pointed out that the changes he makes are not that significant, just removing an odd comma and pluralizing a word, but I think that he had good intentions by bringing this Bill forward. He wanted to make sure that the visibility of the numbers were there on the licence plate so that it would be easier for the Members of the police forces to see them.

The comments he made that he would like to see "Manitoba" displayed, because he is proud to be a Manitoban and he would like to see the "Friendly Manitoba" displayed, makes sense. Unfortunately the conditions of our roads in northern Manitoba are such that you cannot accommodate that.

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that the present Bill covers it thoroughly enough, and it really is not

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necessary to have Bill No.4. I think that the Member should probably withdraw this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member for

The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) will have seven minutes remaining.

This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Wednesday, November 15, 1989, at 1:30 p.m.