



**Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 14, 1997

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** I must inform the House of the unavoidable absence of Madam Speaker and therefore, in accordance with the statute, ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE (continued)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** When the House adjourned on Friday, advice was being provided to the Chair on a matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) that the Speaker's ruling of Thursday, April 10, 1997, during private members' hour not be viewed as a precedent of this House and, further, that this matter be referred to the standing committee on rules.

At adjournment on Friday, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had indicated he had not completed his advice to the Chair and that other members may also want to advise the Chair as to whether a prima facie matter of privilege existed. Therefore, I recognize the honourable member for St. Johns on the matter of privilege.

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a few remarks in addition to the advice already offered to the Chair, just going back to briefly recap what took place.

At the beginning of the session and into the lottery went a resolution by the member for Broadway which stated as its important clause at the end: "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to support legislation to elect the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba by secret ballot to ensure the Speaker's independence," of course following from events that took place in this House, regrettable events, in November, on the 28th and 29th. As well, we referenced other events in this House, for

example, the Speaker's ruling on whether the phrase "racist policies of the government" were parliamentary or not.

What happened on Thursday was the Speaker got up at the beginning of private members' hour and made a ruling. The ruling was that this particular resolution was out of order because, during a matter of privilege early on in this session, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) had moved an amendment to a privilege motion which regarded the idea of electing a Speaker. As well, she referenced the fact that a bill was on the Order Paper regarding the issue of the election of a Speaker.

The points that I wanted to add are these. As one who took place in a debate in this House in the 1995 session in private members' hour, I distinctly recall the long debate that took place regarding amendments to the maintenance enforcement regime in this province. The legislation was introduced, was set down for debate and indeed the legislation was enacted and given Royal Assent. Then we came back for fall sittings, and during that fall sitting a private member's resolution introduced by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) was on the Order Paper. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when that resolution was called for debate, the same Speaker sat there silently, allowing debate to take place, and we all took part willingly and eagerly, in fact, in that debate because it was a very important matter for Manitobans. That resolution talked and urged this House to commend the government for the action it took through its bill. No points of order were raised, and the matter was discussed for the period of one hour of private members' hour.

\* (1335)

That is the kind of precedent we have in this House, and that is how Speakers in this House have exercised discretion in the past and that is how the Speaker of the day exercised her discretion at that time on a government resolution.

The other aspect I wanted to bring to the attention of the Chair is the fact that this resolution was known by the Speaker to be coming up on the Order Paper for

some 23 days. On the day the resolution came up for debate in this House, you, Sir, were not in the Chair; the Speaker was in the Chair. The Speaker did not even have the respect for this House, the respect for her office and respect for the entrenched principle of even the appearance of impartiality of the Chair not to rule against a motion which concerned her own office and her as an individual.

That was shameful; it was a conflict of interest at its worst at a time in this House when I would think that the Speaker and indeed the government, because the opposition does, wants to move towards an Assembly where we can again have some trust in how it works.

But no, the Speaker ruled on a motion that affected her office and she herself. That is the disdain that she has for her office and this Assembly. There is a long series of precedents in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when a motion concerning the Speakership itself is raised and there is no confidence expressed in the Speaker either directly or indirectly in a matter, the Speaker will defer to the will of the House, will allow the matter to go to debate. This is a general observation. There may be certain exceptions to that general rule, but nowhere could that general rule be more applicable than in private members' hour when a matter is raised reflecting on the Speaker and looking at the Speakership as an office of this House. Yet the Speaker did not see fit to allow the matter to be debated—for one hour. It was going to go down to the bottom of the resolutions, one hour, that is all, on a matter that was essential to the operation of this Assembly in our view.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to remind the Speaker, remind all members of this House that in our view—that is, the view deeply held by members of this side—the Speaker does not have the confidence of this House, at least of members of this side, does not in our view have the capability to carry on as Speaker, and in light of our view, that this House must move, as the majority of Legislatures in Canada have, to an elected Speaker, something that again is important to bring forward. This is not an issue that has disappeared into the past. This is very much a live issue, and when we see rulings like this where the Speaker has put herself in a conflict of interest, where she has shown again an inability to hold the position of

Speakership, we say this must be a *prima facie* matter of privilege. It is one that must be considered. We must move towards an elected Speakership and so I certainly support the matter of privilege raised by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) and would urge the Chair, the Speaker to allow this matter to go to debate and to a vote of this House. Thank you.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to add a few words of advice on this ruling on this matter of privilege. I think much has already been said, and I will just reinforce the importance of the fact that this happened during private members' hour. The government and the government members have many opportunities of bringing forward their issues, their agenda, through different vehicles, but private members' hour is an hour where members in opposition and all members have an opportunity of bringing resolutions forward to private member's bill and I think that in making a decision on this matter of privilege a lot of weight should be given to the fact that this happened during private members' hour.

I want to also mention that as a new House leader I appreciated my colleague the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) speaking first and putting our position forward. He has been House leader for a number of years and as a new House leader he probably did it much better than I could, but he also told me, the member for Inkster, that this is not the first time that Private Members' Business has been ruled out of order. He told me that when he brought forward a bill on housing, Speaker Rocan ruled it out of order because there was a government bill present, and so it shows that there is discretion called for by the Speaker.

To show the latitude that the Speaker has, we could use as an example from Beauchesne Section 491, that says "The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore be unparliamentary." This cries out for discretion by the Speaker.

But having said that, the climate that has been created in this Chamber for a number of reasons makes it very

difficult for the Speaker not to keep to the letter of the rules and the letter of the rule Section 31: "No member shall revive a debate already concluded during the session or anticipate a matter appointed for consideration of which notice has been given." That is the ruling that the Speaker referred to, and I am sure the Speaker got the best advice she could to rule on whether that resolution was in fact legitimate.

\* (1340)

Probably, according to the very letter there would be a problem with that resolution but again it is private members' hour and the Speaker should have the discretion to allow it. I know that as a police officer, when you are accused of favouritism when arbitrating to two people, you cannot use as much discretion, so you go to the letter of the law. I think because of the climate that has been created in this Chamber, it is handicapping the Speaker to use common sense, yes, to use common sense and discretion for the good functioning of this Chamber, and we are spiralling down and down and down into less opportunities to allow the Speaker to do the job. But in this case I think the Speaker should have used discretion. This resolution should have been allowed, and I would ask the Speaker to consider this in her ruling.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Just briefly on the point of advice on the matter of privilege, and I, of course, rise on the point of privilege raised by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). One of the fundamental principles that we have stated time and time again, one of the fundamental principles of the rules of this Chamber is that all of our constituents are equal, and all 57 members in this Chamber, in terms of the rules of the Legislature and the privileges and responsibilities and rights of this Legislature, all of us are equal because our constituents are equal. Whether they have voted for a Conservative or a Liberal or a New Democrat, our constituents are all equal, and, therefore, we bring equal rights and responsibilities to this Chamber. In denying the private member's resolution last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again we see the pervasive decisions of the Speaker of the day denying the fundamental rights of each and every one of us to be equal members before the Chair, before the presiding officer in conducting the affairs of our constituents and our constituencies.

That is the essence of the issue of privilege here again today. It is not a question of whether we are spiralling up or spiralling down. It is a question of whether we are undermining, by decisions of the presiding officer, the roles and responsibilities of each and every one of us to represent our constituents in an equal way.

This is not the first time, as the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) have pointed out, this has happened in this Chamber. The rights of all of us to stand on a point of privilege was the major issue of dispute when unilateral decisions were made by a presiding officer to treat one side of the House, that being the governing side of the House, in an unequal and an unfair way to proceed to votes contrary to any motion of closure that was lacking in the Chamber at the time. The decision on racist policy and racist language, the fact that we can call a policy of the federal government racist but a policy of previous and present and future provincial governments—that we can no longer as members of the Legislature represent our constituencies and say this policy is racist, again, is a role of the presiding officer to deny our responsibilities and duties as members, equal members in this Legislature.

It was a private member's resolution last week; it was the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) raising a private member's resolution before this Chamber. Now we have had private members' resolutions that have criticized even the government of the day from the government's own private member. We have had private members' resolutions that have had people on all sides vote even against government policies when it made sense for the constituents. We have had private members' resolutions, as late as last week, that had all-party concurrence. One was the Pan Am Games.

\* (1345)

The right of a private member to bring forward matters on behalf of their constituents, I suggest to all members, is paramount, and I would hope that members opposite will vote for the rights of all private members and deal with the presiding officer in a way that starts to give rights back to all of us and all of our constituents on an equal basis. I would ask the presiding officer to take that into consideration on the legitimate point of privilege by the member for Broadway. Thank you very, very much.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I would like to thank honourable members for their advice on this matter. I will take it under advisement for Madam Speaker.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

### Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Bev Carlson, Audrey Korpan and Terry Genik requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of D. Gouldsbrough, D. Steinwandt, Nina Patey and others requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

### Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? No? Dispense.

*WHEREAS medical authorities have stated that breast cancer in Manitoba has reached almost epidemic proportions; and*

*WHEREAS yearly mammograms are recommended for women over 50, and perhaps younger if a woman feels she is at risk; and*

*WHEREAS while improved surgical procedures and better post-operative care do improve a woman's chances if she is diagnosed, early detection plays a vital role; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba currently has only three centres where mammograms can be performed, those being Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson; and*

*WHEREAS a trip to and from these centres for a mammogram can cost a woman upwards of \$500 which is a prohibitive cost for some women; and*

*WHEREAS a number of other provinces have dealt with this problem by establishing mobile screening units; and*

*WHEREAS the provincial government has promised to take action on this serious issue.*

*WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.*

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review with regard to the 1997-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Decentralization.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 15—The Government Essential Services Amendment Act

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 15, The Government Essential Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services gouvernementaux essentiels), that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to

the House. I would like to table the message from the Lieutenant Governor.

**Motion agreed to.**

\* (1350)

**Bill 18—The Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Point Act**

**Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that leave be given to introduce Bill 18, The Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Point Act (Loi sur les centres téléphoniques de sécurité publique—service d'urgence 911), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would also like to table the message of the Lieutenant Governor.

**Motion agreed to.**

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**SmartHealth Expenditures**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the First Minister. The Premier on December 20, 1995, signed an Order-in-Council authorizing the loan guarantee and expenditure of some \$26 million to the SmartHealth agreement that the government had entered into.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would like to ask the government: How much money has been expended by SmartHealth, and how much money has been loaned and guaranteed by the Province of Manitoba under the Order-in-Council signed by the Premier?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** I will take that question as notice and bring the detailed information back to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand that one of the committees dealing with the confidential

information is meeting to look at draft privacy legislation sometime this week. It seems to us that legislation dealing with privacy and confidentiality should be in place before any money is either loaned or expended by the taxpayers of this province to the Royal Bank subsidiary.

I would like to ask the Premier: Has any money been expended by the province? Has any money been loan guaranteed by the province, and does it not make absolute sense for us to have legislation in place first for dealing with the privacy of citizens rather than having money flow first and deal with the privacy of legislation second?

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take that question as notice and bring back the detailed information to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Doer:** The Premier has been critical of almost everybody about their concerns on confidential information, concerns about this system of dealing with the SmartHealth operation.

In light of the fact that this Order-in-Council was signed some 16 months ago by the Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) authorizing the expenditure of some \$26 million in loan guarantees and expenditures to SmartHealth, I would like to ask the Premier: Will he ensure that no money flows in either loan guarantees or in expenditures until there is adequate time for this Legislature, this body of people, to pass legislation that will meet the test of Manitobans, that will meet the test of the Supreme Court decision dealing with confidential medical records that has been passed by the Supreme Court of Canada? Does it not make complete and total sense to deal with the privacy issues first, rather than have the money and loan guarantees flow before the privacy of our citizens?

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will respond to that in conjunction with the information that I undertook to take as notice just moments ago.

**Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Avant que nous poursuivions, je tiens à signaler la présence dans la galerie publique de 11 visiteurs de Toulouse, France, sous la direction

de Monsieur Gerald McLeod. Ce groupe visite la circonscription de la députée de Fort Garry. Bienvenue au Manitoba.

**[Translation]**

Before we continue, I would like to indicate the presence in the public gallery of 11 visitors from Toulouse, France, under the direction of Mr. Gerald McLeod. This group is visiting the constituency of the member for Fort Garry. Welcome to Manitoba.

\* (1355)

**Holiday Haven Nursing Home  
Departmental Investigation**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

In 1989 the province stepped in to operate the Rideau Park Personal Care Home directly. We have researched the authority of the Minister of Health, and if the Minister of Health were to review the regulations in the Manitoba Gazette under The Personal Care Home Act, the minister would note that the minister has extensive authority to obtain information from personal care homes on demand as well as financial information, and the minister can withhold funding and force those institutions to provide that information.

The real tragedy of Holiday Haven is that we raised the issue in October and nothing—

**An Honourable Member:** Is there a question?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, there is a question, to the deputy minister. Perhaps the deputy minister will do something about it because they did not.

The real issue here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why the province did not do anything from October until a death occurred in February. Will the minister now institute an investigation of his own department's handling of this issue so we can be assured that this can never happen again in Manitoba?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** As the member well knows, once this particular matter was brought to my attention we took steps to change the management. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was done under

the information provided me by the department that I did not have specific power to change management there. We requested that the operators of the facility relinquish their management, which they did. I can assure the member that in that particular facility we have a new management team. They are working towards ensuring that that facility can be accredited.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Can the minister explain how the department has failed to act on numerous, dozens and dozens of complaints at Holiday Haven, other personal care homes, their own study and report from three years ago with 39 recommendations for improvements to personal care homes. How the department, the ministers of Health, the previous and the present, have failed to act on their own recommendations to prevent the kind of tragedy that occurred at Holiday Haven?

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to this particular incident that occurred early in my tenure as Minister of Health, I have undertaken a review internally of the workings within the ministry to see how we handle these issues and, as the member has pointed out, there is certainly a need for a number of things to take place, including audit and inspection. If there is one fault here, I think it is the people in the department, the staff in the department who have worked with personal care homes, have tried to resolve issues at the level of management in trying to resolve issues in personal care homes, working with the management of those facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope within a very short period of time to announce some changes that we will be taking that will ensure I think a better role in ensuring the protection of people in the personal care homes of our province.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can the people of Manitoba have any more confidence in the pronouncements of the minister today, more pronouncements about change, when 39 recommendations that resulted from previous tragedies in personal care homes were not followed up on, when previous concerns raised by members in this House were not followed up on, when concerns raised by patients and residents were not followed up on? When the minister and the government took over another personal care home in 1989 on demand because it was



a labour dispute, how can we have any assurance that the pronouncements by this minister, without a comprehensive plan and a review of the department's handling, how can we have any confidence that the situation could possibly improve yet?

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have referred I believe in Question Period before and certainly responded to media requests, I have put in place an individual today who is reviewing for me the operation and making some recommendations on how we can improve our service within the ministry. As well, I would remind the member that in our personal care homes across the province families of people who are in those facilities are in those facilities on a daily or weekly basis. There are always issues that arise from time to time, but generally speaking, we have a very good personal care home system in our province.

#### **Labour Market Training Co-Management Agreement**

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government is offloading responsibility for labour force development, but the Manitoba government does have a choice of accepting complete devolution as Alberta and New Brunswick have, or of a co-management agreement which maintains jobs across Manitoba, retains the sense of a national vision and brings a broad range of skills to the planning process, and which has been accepted by Newfoundland and is under discussion right now, according to new information in British Columbia and the Yukon.

I want to ask the Minister of Education why, according to a recent bulletin from the federal government, Manitoba is rejecting the co-operative opportunity that co-management offers.

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** The whole process of negotiating with the federal government and the provinces has been a bilateral one, province by province, each province negotiating individually with the federal government rather than all the provinces together bargaining and negotiating for one set formula for across the nation. The reason for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is very obvious. Each province will have its own needs, its own way of addressing items. The goal for each

province has been, and the goal for Manitoba definitely is, that we wish to negotiate the very best opportunities for Manitoba, the very best kinds of funding arrangements with the federal government that we possibly can, and we will do that in the best interests of Manitoba in a made-in-Manitoba solution that will suit us best just as the other provinces negotiate something that suits them best.

**Ms. Friesen:** Could the minister confirm that the real reason that Manitoba has rejected co-management is because the co-management agreement in Newfoundland provides for labour force development boards to include not just business but labour and education and that that is the real reason that this government is rejecting that approach, because it is an approach that they have rejected over the last five years?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** No, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

#### **Records Confidentiality**

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, could the minister explain how, in the agreement she is negotiating, client confidential personal information will be protected when the administration of labour market programs requires access to Employment Insurance files which are linked to Revenue Canada files?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a team of very capable negotiators working on this entire package for us, and we should have details ready to indicate to the member very soon as to exactly how we are going to be going about enhancing and improving the way in which this service is delivered in Manitoba. I assure her that implied in her question is an indication that she thinks these things are of no consequence to us, and in that she is totally and absolutely incorrect.

\* (1400)

#### **Shelter Allowance for Family Renters Funding**

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been asking this government to explain

why they have cut the Shelter Allowance for Family Renters Program by 20 percent when it helps over 1,500 families a year with a rent supplement of on average \$125 a year, which helps them to avoid going to food banks, to have increased security and a better standard of living, including housing.

The minister has claimed there is poor uptake in this program. I want to ask the minister if he has been advised to read the Children and Youth Secretariat early childhood working group report, which recommends proposing and promoting the SAFFR program and that would allow families to do the very things I have just talked about, have increased money for food and have a better standard of housing.

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the program that the member is alluding to, the SAFFR program, somehow the member is alluding to the fact that money has been taken away from this program. The money that is allocated to this program is based on applications. If applications go down, naturally there is not as much money that is spent in this program.

Now, when we are setting up the objectives of the budget, we look at the previous year's applications. We use those figures as a basis for putting in for our budgetary considerations. At the end of the year when we look at the amount of take-up on this particular program, if there is not the amount of people that have been designated by the projections, then naturally the amount has gone down. So it is not a decrease in the funding that has gone. It is just that there are not as many applicants that have taken advantage of the program.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister did not answer my question, but I want to—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I would ask the honourable member to put her question. There is not time for a statement prior to her question at this time.

The honourable member for Radisson, with her question, please.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I want to ask the Minister of Family Services why this recommendation to promote the

Shelter Allowance for Family Renters Program so that we will increase the uptake was not included in her Children First strategic plan, their document which is supposed to be the accumulated reports of the working groups from the Children and Youth Secretariat. Why are they cutting this program, rather than implementing the recommendation from the working group?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and—no, that is going way back.

The honourable Minister of Family Services.

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You were going back to good old days when you made that comment.

I want to thank my honourable friend for that question and indicate that, rather than members of the opposition talking and discussing and yelling across the floor while my colleagues are trying to answer questions, if they had listened very carefully and very intently, they would have heard the Minister of Housing explain very clearly how the program works. It does work well for those people that apply for the program.

I do want to indicate too that many of the new initiatives, if we could get on with passing the Estimates and on with the business of the House that is at hand—pass the Estimates and look at new programs that are going to benefit children and families through new initiatives through the Child and Youth Secretariat and with the co-operation of all departments.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Radisson, with her final supplementary question.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the Premier: Will he admit that this is a \$250,000 symbol of how this government is dealing with poverty, to claim one thing, to have reports that recommend to expand and promote programs, and in the budget to cut those very programs?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the answer is: Absolutely not. What I think the member for Radisson fails to realize is that you put in money in demand-driven programs for the money that

you expect to be spent. In Pharmacare, for instance, we pay all the bills that come in and what we put in the Estimates is the estimate of what we expect to spend, but if, in fact, more is required, more is spent, because it is—[interjection]

Here we have people opposite who are so concerned with symbolism that they do not deal with reality. If there are applications for shelter allowances that meet the criteria, they will be approved and the money will be spent. So you do not budget for more money than you expect to spend. You budget for what you expect to spend, and if more is required, more is put in. It is a totally demand-driven program. We have a member opposite who does not understand that. Maybe some of her colleagues who have been in government can explain that to her.

The fact of the matter is, this is absolutely a reflection of what is intended to be spent, and further still, if there is less demand, it is because people are having greater incomes and therefore have less dependence on the shelter allowances, and that is exactly, exactly what we want to see in this province is people's incomes rise, their standard of living rise, and therefore less dependence on government programs, not more dependence like the members opposite want. [interjection]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I do not think she believes you, Gary.

### **Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccination Program**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Pneumococcal pneumonia is a potential threat to thousands of Manitobans. In Manitoba, persons infected by the age of 65 spend an average of 15.6 days in the hospital due to this infection. This is the second highest rate of hospitalization in Canada, and the infection can have a mortality rate that runs as high as 40 percent. A vaccine is available, yet Manitoba has no plans for a vaccination program.

The simple question to the Minister of Health is: Why not?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that currently the vaccine is provided at no cost to patients who have a chronic medical condition and whose physician does request it. The larger question, of course, is are we planning to get involved into a large-scale immunization program. I understand that our people within the department who manage these are having discussions now and looking at the benefits of such a program, so it is under consideration within the ministry.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the Minister of Health at least approve a vaccination program to protect the health of residents, in particular in areas such as our nursing homes?

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated to the member, this particular vaccine is available at no cost to any individual in this province whose physician requests it because it fits with their medical requirements. The consideration of having even a limited or large-scale vaccination program is one that is not necessarily taken as an easy decision to make. There are a lot of factors that fit into that. Obviously, you have the potential of inconveniencing and there is always some risk with vaccination to vast numbers of people. I understand Ontario is the only province that has launched that to date, and we are looking at that program. It is under consideration, but it is not just an easy decision to make.

\* (1410)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Inkster, with his final supplementary question.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I wonder if the Minister of Health can indicate to the House in terms of when does he anticipate that we will be hearing from the Department of Health whether or not Manitoba will in fact have a vaccination program, so that in the long term our health care needs will be met into the future and there is also the potential saving of considerable dollars.

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I pointed out to the member, there is always a host of factors that have to play into that type of decision. The medical expertise within my department, they are considering a proposal now to do such a thing. When they have

worked through the process and have a recommendation for me, then we will make a decision.

### **Sheriff's Officers Meeting Agenda**

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. The sheriff's officers in the Department of Justice have been concerned for some time now about a lack of government response to their fears about staffing levels, equipment, protocol, training. There has been some attention to this issue both in the local media and we raised a question last week in this House, but the issue came to a head, I think, when we saw the police more frequently being called in to do, at public expense, the work of sheriff's officers.

My question to the minister is—and this is further to his answer last week that he was not about to interfere even in providing this House with numbers of recommendations implemented for their safety: What role did the minister have in calling a special meeting between management and sheriff's officers on Friday afternoon?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I specifically asked no one to meet, I was very pleased that my senior staff, as a result of questions raised in this House, went to speak to the sheriff's officers to ensure that there were no outstanding issues that could not be addressed immediately. I understand that meeting did occur between some of my senior officials and the sheriff's department—very pleased to see that happen, and I hope it continues to happen.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Would the minister confirm to this House that the meeting was not about employee safety but was about the government's issue of image, because the meeting was called to issue a gag order and threaten the employees that, if they spoke to the media or MLAs, there would be disciplinary action?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is one of the most irresponsible accusations that I have ever heard. If that member for St. Johns wants to go and visit the sheriff's officers today, he is free to do so. If members of the media wish to speak to sheriff's officers or to

senior officials in my department, they are welcome to do so. I have been very open, very frank with the media indicating exactly where we are in terms of the recommendation. I am very pleased to see the progress that has been made. There is always time for more.

You know, I want to say if there is any concern at all about the process that has been adopted, there are Workplace Safety and Health independent officers who can go in and make that assessment. I would welcome any inquiry by Workplace Safety and Health in that respect.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with his final supplementary question.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, then, I will follow up by asking the minister: Who are Manitobans to believe, the people, the sheriff's officers who were at that meeting and reported that, or the minister?

**Mr. Toews:** Frankly, this is a member who has really no concern about those officers' safety. I want to say here on the record—

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, on a point of order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to consider, I ask the minister to consider his remarks right now, and I ask the minister to consider tackling the issue rather than the messenger and withdraw those remarks that reflected on my purpose in bringing this very serious matter of personal and public safety to the Legislature.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no objection to the message; it is just that the messenger is not very accurate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister, to conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Toews:** Without wanting to engage in partisan politics, I want to assure this House that the safety of public servants, who are doing an important job, is my primary concern.

He has made certain accusations in respect of the involvement of sheriff's officers and police officers. I want to indicate that that is an ongoing role and will always be an ongoing role for police officers. If he wants a complete briefing on that aspect, he can go to see any one of the senior officers in my department to explain why police officers are involved in providing security in certain situations. That is a situation that has existed as long as I can remember. It continues. We have supplemented the number of sheriff's officers by I believe it is 10 part-time sheriff's officers to accommodate fluctuating needs.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I care about the sheriff's officers, I care about the safety of the public.

### **Louisiana-Pacific Environmental Concerns**

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a letter to Louisiana-Pacific dated March 24 from Mr. Larry Strachan, he spells out that wood wastes not contaminated with resin or hazardous material may be used for livestock production operations. He also says that the livestock area must be 50 feet away from water and that the area not cause pollution to surface water. I will table those letters.

Given that direction from Mr. Strachan, can the minister explain why his department has not stepped in to prevent the wastes that are being dumped in a sensitive area, that being the NE 31-35-26 where material is being dumped in a slough?

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the specifics provided in the preamble to her question. We will examine that exact site, and if any remediation is required, that remediation will be carried out.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Given that the directive says wood wastes contaminated with resin cannot be used for livestock bedding, I would like to table this manila folder for the minister and share with him some of the material that is being put into the site. I would like to tell the minister that this material is—[interjection] These are clearly pieces of processed material. I would like to ask the minister why his department is allowing material to be dumped in a slough which is full of cattails and will soon be the site of ducks and geese nesting. Why is he letting material covered with resin be put into these sites?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member—I would not say that you were displaying it, but the product that you have tabled would be a little difficult to table. I think that your end result was that you wanted to get it to the minister. If you wanted to just pass it to the minister rather than tabling it, not yourself but the page, but rather than tabling it so that we do not have to take it into the record. So if the page would just take it to the minister.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would be happy to have the minister have them. There are three copies if other people would like them.

**Mr. McCrae:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I assure the honourable member that neither I nor the Environment department has any intention whatever of allowing contaminated substances or materials to be deposited in environmentally sensitive places. So, as I said in answer to the first question put by the honourable member, she has given us specific information, which is something that is appreciated—it was not done that way last time around—and we will be very happy to follow up this question.

\* (1420)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Swan River, with her final supplementary question.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, given that this is a very serious matter for the people in the valley, for people who live on the reserves downstream who are concerned about their water supply, will the minister tell us why his staff is not taking action when this site was reported last week on Wednesday and on Saturday

this material was still being deposited? When are you going to start taking some action and protect the water?

**Mr. McCrae:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will, along with the Environment department, examine the details of the information we have already made available with respect to the various sites where this type of material is stored. We will look into the matter to see if we are talking about an additional site, and if that is the case and there is toxic material—I remind the honourable member that the material we were talking about previously has been found to be nontoxic and natural in its properties—if the honourable member is raising something different and new today, that indeed would be a different and new matter, and we would certainly look into it with all vigour.

#### **RCS Greenhouses Government Assistance**

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, we learned recently that the Waskada greenhouses, from which a lovely ripe and flavourful tomato was presented to each member in the House last year by, I believe, the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, is in receivership and that it is possible that the family involved may lose their farm as well.

Could the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism please tell the House why his department did not get actively involved in assisting this excellent product to find the markets that it deserved in Manitoba? Why was his department not actively engaged in this?

**Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me at the outset say that the information the member brings to the House is inaccurate. The Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism along with the Department of Rural Development have been working very aggressively to try and find options that would be helpful for the RCS Greenhouses in the Waskada community. There would be a great desire to have that operation operating and providing produce.

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the minister confirm that the company is currently not meeting its obligations and is in fact in default and that the family is at serious risk of losing their farm and that at this

point he is talking about closing a door long after the horse is gone?

**Mr. Downey:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me again indicate to the member that there is a series of conditions that developed as it related to the greenhouses. I can tell the member as well that there have been many community people working to try to find alternatives. Also, I can assure the member that there was a stay of proceedings that was introduced as it relates to the Farm Debt Review Act which put the whole issue on hold for a series of time, and there were no alternatives that could, at the particular time, be brought forward that would have anything happen but what has happened.

#### **Student Transportation Minibuses**

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Changes to the capital school bus formula means that local school divisions are responsible for replacing their bus fleets and lifts the already extended usage limit of 15 and a half years. This downloading means that we will see even older buses on our roads, higher property taxes and greater safety concerns.

Will the minister tell us: Is she still recommending the use of minivans to replace school buses to transport students, despite the safety concerns raised by divisions such as Lakeshore School Division No. 23?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** I have never recommended the use of minivans.

**Ms. Mihychuk:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my second question to the minister: Will the minister confirm—and given that April is Mathematics Education Month, I have a mathematics question for her—that this program will in fact cost the Winnipeg School Division over \$2 million and that this will come from property taxes or programs for children, from classrooms or property taxes?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** No, I will not confirm that.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for St. James, with her final supplementary question.

**Ms. Mihychuk:** Well, I do not think that is really a problem-solving answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it was not a short question.

**An Honourable Member:** You want a long answer, sweetie?

**Ms. Mihychuk:** Mr. Deputy Speaker—

What did she say?

**An Honourable Member:** . . . sweetie.

**Ms. Mihychuk:** What I want is a direct answer and for her to come forward and tell Manitobans that this program is another downloading and more manipulation of the budget numbers.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** I would warrant you cannot get much more direct than yes and no, but if she does not think that is direct, perhaps she could give me a new definition of being direct.

I say to the member that we are now providing for school divisions the amount of money equivalent to the purchase of a bus. We used to buy the bus; we now give them the amount of money they require equivalent to the purchase price of a bus. They can now choose whether or not to purchase the bus, or they can redirect the money to something else if they feel they would like to do that.

As well, we are now providing for urban school divisions busing grants for students, kindergarten to Grade 6, which we never used to do before. We will also provide it for Grades 7 and 8 if the school divisions decide they wish to bus students in that particular arena.

So we have not, as the member indicated, done anything detrimental. Rather, we have actually, I believe, helped improve a situation.

#### **Deputy Minister of Natural Resources Investigation**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, last fall Manitobans were treated to the spectacle of the deputy of Natural Resources claiming \$7,300 in

restaurant, liquor and lounge bills and claiming to do it in the employ of the Province of Manitoba. The government's response was to assign the investigation of this appropriateness or not to the Clerk of the Executive Council.

My question for the Minister of Natural Resources is: Why is no report being presented to the people of Manitoba regarding the appropriateness of these expenses?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will be provided.

**Mr. Struthers:** Instead of covering up, why does this minister not ask the Provincial Auditor to investigate this matter instead of taking part in a cover-up that was begun last fall?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps the member might want to reserve his opinion until he has seen the report.

\* (1430)

#### **Investigation—Report Availability**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, when will that report be ready for Manitobans?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will undertake to make sure that report is made available.

#### **Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy—Garage Sale**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Native and Northern Affairs. Recently the minister and I both attended a public forum at the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre. The forum was organized by aboriginal women and the focus was on combatting poverty. The Minister of Native and Northern Affairs suggested that one solution to the problem of poverty was to have a garage sale. This was met by outrage by the people who were present. Notwithstanding the fact that the government may go ahead on this, could the

Minister of Native and Northern Affairs tell the Legislature and tell poor aboriginal Winnipeggers and Manitobans how having a garage sale is going to solve the problem of income poverty?

**Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that the honourable member for Burrows was present on that Saturday afternoon for a long and very, I felt, meaningful day, where I am sure we all learned a lot. One thing that I learned was having a garage sale in the way that it was presented met with public disapproval of several members in attendance. The idea was not a traditional garage sale, but the idea was to have products donated by manufacturers and others who had products that were worthy of citizens of Winnipeg which would then be—the whole process would be managed by the people in the community and the proceeds would go to the benefit of the people in the community so they learn entrepreneurship, organizational skills and get revenue.

I might say, after a few vocal participants indicated displeasure with that idea, after the event was over, a number of people came up to me and staff and indicated that was a good idea and they would like to participate in it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Time for Oral Question Period has expired.

## NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

**Dr. Robert Sangster**

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain):** Do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mr. Tweed:** It is a great pleasure for me to rise today to offer congratulations from myself and the people of Turtle Mountain and hopefully on behalf of all Manitobans to Dr. Robert Sangster of Baldur, Manitoba. Dr. Sangster was nominated for the Family Physician of the Year Award on behalf of the entire

Baldur Health District staff and on April 11 was presented as the winner of this award.

“Dr. Bob,” as he is affectionately known in the community of Baldur and surrounding districts, was nominated for this award by the community of Baldur and for his community involvement. He is an active member in the Baldur Business and Economic Development Committee and for the Argyle municipality, and he is certainly dealing with the current issues of the day, including the securing of another financial institution in the community of Baldur and dealing with the seniors housing issues. He is also active in many of the community events that take place, and I know in the times that I have stopped in to visit with him to say hello, I have met him in different locations, such as the curling club, the coffee shop and at work.

He was the founding member of the southwest association of rural physicians, and he is the district chairperson for southwestern rural education program through the University of Manitoba.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the comments that were made when he was nominated and when he received the award exemplify the fine man that Dr. Bob is. They referred to him as a tenacious medical detective, a man of integrity, a keen sense of humour, always approachable, supportive, conscientious and a willing teacher, and I think the one statement made by his colleagues probably represents the greatest feeling of all. That was they referred to him as a gold standard against which all other doctors are compared. He is certainly a fine member of the community and a symbol and an example for all. and I stand here today to offer my congratulations to Dr. Robert Sangster.

## Village Lane

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Osborne have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Ms. McGifford:** Today, I want to bring the attention of all members of this Chamber to the development of



Village Lane in Osborne Village. This project will transform a dilapidated building on Wardlaw and Osborne into 20,000 square feet of market area, including 12 individual stores. Village Lane, expected to be finished in May, will offer a variety of shops to residents, for example, fruit and vegetable stands, a butcher, a deli, and so will bring the traditional market milieu of the village which, with its dense population and pedestrian traffic, is the perfect setting for a market.

But Village Lane is more than a commercial enterprise. Consider the history of the village. There have been several incarnations—early in the century and then a rebirth during the passionate and romantic sixties. Now again, after some difficult years, it is time for another rebirth. During each of these phases, the village has always managed to keep its personality and be an urban village, a place of goods and services, a place of charm and intimacy midst a large sprawling urban centre. Village Lane is reclaiming Osborne Village, giving it new life and personality while retaining its original flavour.

I want to comment, too, on the family behind Village Lane. The Lagopoulos family have been village mainstays for 30 years. They helped revitalize the community in the '60s, just as they are doing in the '90s. In the meantime, they have lived in the village, participated in streetscaping, the development of the Osborne Village Biz, and done just about everything that community-spirited people do.

In closing, I congratulate all Osborne Villagers on their determination to bloom again. Weather permitting, when the snow clears, it should be a great spring. Thank you.

#### **Hebrew Sick Benefit Association**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Kildonan have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mr. Chomiak:** I had the honour and pleasure, together with other elected officials and many hundreds of members from the community, to celebrate and

congratulate the Hebrew Sick Benefit Association on their 90th anniversary celebration the past Saturday. This is an organization that began in 1906 and which was recognized to serve as a spiritual and guiding light amongst all of the new Jewish immigrants in Winnipeg. The association was a place where these immigrants could get help with their problems, were guided culturally, spiritually and financially. It provided a wide range of services for its members, including free dental and medical care, religious services and even free burials in their own cemetery. In fact, as many speakers pointed out, it was a forerunner to medicare in many instances. It manages apartments. It has been a vibrant organization, and it is carried on now in not only the Jewish community at large but in the community that I represent at large and beyond to provide benefits to many, many individuals.

It was a very exciting evening, an evening of hope, an evening of building a foundation for the future based on the past 90 years. It was also time for commemoration to celebrate as well the Beth Israel Synagogue 20th anniversary, a synagogue that was formed partially, Mr. Deputy Speaker, together with a merger from the Hebrew Sick Benefit Association.

\* (1440)

I can only wish congratulations on behalf of all members of this Chamber to the outstanding work of the anniversary committee, including chairpersons Dave Chochinov and Sharon Bronstone, the fundraising committee, and all the honorees and past presidents of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Association and Beth Israel Synagogue and the sisterhood who have carried out their work inside and out of the community these past 90 years and can only anticipate further work in the community as their work continues.

I might add, we also were honoured to have a concert prepared by the cantors from the other synagogues in the city of Winnipeg which was an outstanding representation of Jewish culture, history and spiritual development, and I can only say it was one of the most inspiring evenings that my wife and I and all of the individuals have ever had an opportunity to attend.

So, on behalf of all members of the Chamber, I wish congratulations and a hearty congratulations and

support to the Hebrew Sick Benefit Association on its 90th anniversary and Beth Israel Synagogue on its 20th anniversary. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

### **Parkland Region Events**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I request leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Dauphin have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mr. Struthers:** This past weekend was a big one in the history of the town of Dauphin and the Parklands surrounding it. We had not one but two grand openings on the weekend. On Friday, April 11, the Dauphin RCMP subdivision was formally opened with tours available and very many people in attendance for the well-organized and very deserved celebration that took place in Dauphin at the opening of our subdivision.

I want to recognize the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) for making the trip up to Dauphin to join with us in the celebration of the Dauphin RCMP subdivision. It was a project that was in the planning stages and the arm-twisting stages for many years since the mid and early 1980s. It finally became a reality on Friday, and I look forward to the continuation of an excellent community program that the RCMP do in our area out of that building.

On Saturday, April 12, the town of Dauphin also celebrated the grand opening of the Parkland Recreation Complex, another project that was in the planning stages for a long time and now has also reached fruition, and I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing, Mr. Reimer, for taking the time to come up to Dauphin and join with us in the celebration there as well.

The recreation complex is a one-of-a-kind unique facility for Manitoba, and I would offer my congratulations to the mayors and town councils and the reeves and town councils over the past number of years who have worked so hard and diligently to make this dream a reality. I also want to point out specifically Mr. Dave Bosiak of the Dauphin Joint Recreation Commission for his vision and leadership

and Mr. Conrad Artibise for his dedication and hard work in fundraising for this project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say again it was a big weekend for Dauphin, one in which we celebrated the co-operative efforts of many people in our area. Thank you.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **House Business**

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), that Mr. Deputy Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

**Motion agreed to,** and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Housing; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Natural Resources.

## **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)**

### **HOUSING**

**Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson):** Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Housing. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 83 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** When we ended off last time, we were talking about Lord Selkirk Park, I believe. The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) had gotten in on asking some questions, and I wanted to continue on in that vein.

I want to get some quite specific information. We had been discussing the problem with vacancy rates at Lord Selkirk Park and other public housing developments and the costs that that is having on the

Department of Housing. So I want to spend a little bit more time dealing with that, and I guess, just first of all, I want to get some fairly specific information from the minister on this.

First of all, though, just to confirm that Lord Selkirk Park has had their mortgage paid; is that correct? That is one of the developments that is paid off, as it were?

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** Yes, I believe that is true. That has no outstanding debt on it.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So what kind of detailed information do you have with you from the staff here in terms of the costs at Lord Selkirk Park annually and monthly? I am interested in getting some more detailed information in terms of maintenance costs, and I know I have got some information with me about maintenance costs budgeted, different developments. Let me see here. This is modernization of improvements. That is what I am interested in finding out, modernization of improvements, maintenance and any other costs that are associated with specifically Lord Selkirk Park and to find out as well what amounts you are generating in terms of rent revenue from that development and specifically what the vacancies there are costing you right now.

\* (1450)

**Mr. Reimer:** We are just trying to get the figures because we have to use them at different levels in the statistic book, but the amount of units that we have got vacant in the total units is 126 units vacant out of 314, which represents a 40 percent vacancy rate in that complex. The member was asking for the amount of money that is generated out of that unit. It will naturally fluctuate by month because of the vacancy rate, but the latest figure was just over \$65,000 per month that is generated from those units.

As to the maintenance, we do not have that figure here, but we can get those figures for the member.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I would appreciate that. Just considering that this development has its mortgage paid, what the opportunity is then for it to not be a money loser but a moneymaker in terms of the rent coming in.

I would appreciate if I could get similar information for the other developments. Maybe divide them—I know I have asked before—of the ones that have their mortgages paid for already, and how many of the other developments, particularly in the core area, the ones that are high vacancy, to look at the cost there for maintenance and modernization improvement, just to finish off on that thought then, to get that information as well. I am sure that you have this similar to the information you sent me from last year. I am sure the department has all this already, and it is not a big problem of getting that to me for each of the different developments, particularly in the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Reimer:** I think it is just a matter of, as the member mentioned, getting the right correlation of the lines and the expenses towards it, and we can endeavour to get that for the member, sure.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Thank you. Just then generally, how many other developments—and I am looking at this list, the ones that are having real problems with vacancies, but maybe I should look more at the ones just generally and not focus just on the ones that are having problems with vacancies.

I want to find out how many in our portfolio in the province have their mortgages paid for, and if you have some kind of figure that we are still owing—that is probably in the Estimates book here somewhere—the amount we are still owing in terms of mortgage.

**Mr. Reimer:** The majority of the units that are still in the Housing portfolio would still have a fair amount of debt associated with them because the vast majority of the units that were built were in the '70s, which were subject to 50-year mortgages. So there is still a fair amount of money outstanding on them. In general terms, the outstanding mortgages, totally, would be somewhere between \$300 million and \$350 million that is still outstanding as a figure owing on these properties.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I want to move into a related area. It has to do with the way that the Manitoba Housing Authority, the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation are addressing the whole issue of identifying properties to declare as surplus. I was

interested in the Estimates book this time to see that there is actually more detailed description. It says, prepare plus or minus 1,500 various legal documents for sales, transfers, leases, loans, guarantees, discharges, right-of-ways, subdivisions, easements, security renewals, et cetera. Then it says, dispose of real properties declared surplus or acquired by foreclosure.

I have a lot of questions in this area. Maybe to start off with, I would just to ask you to define what surplus means and the process that you use for declaring properties as surplus.

**Mr. Reimer:** There is a fair amount of involvement in looking at the Housing portfolio as to coming to any type of decision regarding whether projects are surplus and whether they should be offered for sale, and what the criteria are for listing projects for sale. We do have what we call an asset review committee set up within the board, which is charged with looking at the portfolio in the various venues. What it has been doing is looking at not only housing material or housing stock here in Winnipeg, but also throughout Manitoba with the idea of looking at areas of whether there is merit to declaring the projects surplus, taking into consideration their vacancy rates, to a degree the cost of repairs that is associated with these buildings, the ongoing maintenance of the building or buildings in trying to come to some sort of direction on it.

\* (1500)

It is a fairly detailed and quite a long process because we do not want to just be selling things for the sake of selling them; there has to be a logical return or logical realization that we are not just having a fire sale on these buildings for the sake of getting out of them. There has to be either a logical and a reasonable reason for declaring the building surplus. Even if it is declared surplus, that does not mean necessarily that it is going to be sold because of the fact that a lot of times, because of location and market conditions, it just may not be feasible for anybody to buy it. We have a lot of buildings in the remote areas, in small towns, that have been declared surplus for years, and they sit on our books year after year after year as surplus units, and we cannot do anything about it.

That does not mean that we are going to just sell them for a buck or something like that. We look at trying to get a fairly reasonable return on them or try to recuperate the taxpayers' investment in it as best we can, so there are units—I do not know whether we have the number that are sitting on our books right now declared surplus, but I do know that in some of our outlying areas they have been on there for a long time. They have not been picked up; they just sit there. So, in the meantime, we will utilize them for housing, and if there becomes an opportunity to possibly move them into a different sector or under a different ownership, we will move those people if they are still in there into different accommodations or try to accommodate them that way. So there are a fair number of variables that come into play before there is a decision as to how the units are disposed of.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I would appreciate it if you could go into a little bit more detail in this area. I mean, you have mentioned a few things, maintenance costs, the vacancy rates. As you said, there is a very specific sort of process or formula that is considered. I am interested in both getting a little bit more detail here and now, and then seeing if you could provide for me, following up our Estimates here, something in writing.

**Mr. Reimer:** It has been pointed out that in a lot of the rural areas, this is where there is the situation of surplus properties that have sat for a long time and nothing has happened with them. It is just because of the lack of demand to pick up these units. A good example is duplexes where we will have one person in there continually for upwards of two years or more, where we cannot rent the other one.

The member asked for the criteria. It varies in extent because of the locations as to what is going to dictate being declared surplus, other than, like I mentioned before, chronic vacancies and the fact that they do not fit into the town's scheme of people wanting to stay there, or they just do not want those units, and so they become surplus to us. If the member wants, I can get the list of surplus vacant property that has already been sitting on our book and possibly even whether it can have a time frame involved with how long some of them have been vacant. We can fix that up. We can get that for the member.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am going to try a bit of a different approach on this. What is the government's goal in this whole area of doing this? You said that there is ongoing assessing, and there is a committee that is continually dealing with this whole area. What is the government's goal?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that our primary goal and one of our mandates with the Housing department is to be there to supply affordable housing to the citizens of Manitoba in a manner that is the most efficient, not only for the users but for the providers of the units. The evaluation that I am referring to, I think, is healthy in that we have to be aware of where there is no longer need, so there are no longer demands. It is usually that the "no longer the demand" for housing will dictate whether we will sell the unit or declare it surplus and try to sell it. That is usually the criteria.

The utilization of public housing, if there is a demand for it, and they are being utilized in the rural areas, and there are units, we will keep filling these units. It is not that we are on a mandate of total dissolving of all of our assets. Our primary function as public housing is to supply housing to people on an affordable basis.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, it is kind of concerning because, similar to the issue I was raising in the House during Question Period, the government is deciding on the amount of social housing or public housing that they are providing based on, to a large extent, the vacancy rate. It sounds like it from what you were just saying. There may be all sorts of other problems that are related to that vacancy that should be dealt with prior to just declaring those properties surplus. I mean, I realize, particularly in rural Manitoba, that there is a declining population in a lot of communities, that the population is not growing, but there certainly are numbers, thousands of families and seniors in our province that need subsidized housing. That is why I am so concerned about the response here today and your approach to determining to declare them surplus and try and sell them off.

\* (1510)

You know, I do have a list with me of the properties from '95-96—I guess this list is from—and at that time there were 10 units under consideration for possible

sale and relocation. I am not sure if that is across the whole province. There were some that were temporarily rented, 13. There were 71 that were in the process of public tender for sale, and the units that were sold and lost from the social housing portfolio were 89. I am wondering if this year—how much those numbers have changed.

You can also respond to my other points that I made about the way that this is being done and the whole problem of sort of the lowest common denominator approach. If there is no one wanting to move in, even though you have got all these different issues around why there is a vacancy rate, it seems that the bottom line becomes, you are losing money, there is a vacancy rate, so let us see how we can put them up as surplus.

**Mr. Reimer:** The member was referring to the need for social housing in the various sectors of our population, whether it is the youth or the social housing—pardon me, not the youth, but the seniors and social housing. I guess our mandate has always been that we would try to accommodate and utilize our units because if they are not being filled or being occupied, naturally the costs are still there, the fixed costs, and the maintenance costs are fixed towards these units, so it is better for us to have them occupied.

We talked the other day about the rental committee that was formed to try to market these units, and we have had some very good success with these initially as pointed out with Osborne and Carriage Road in attracting tenants there. This is something on a learning curve in a sense with this marketing committee. We are monitoring it fairly close to see whether we can sort of expand this or how we can better utilize getting more people into our units.

We have also gone to a trial basis of some market rents in a few areas. We have done it here in the city of Winnipeg at Columbus Courts. We have done it in six towns in rural Manitoba looking at market rent so that we could attract people in some of the smaller towns, where the town's council and local town people have told us that there are units there. Based on the G&R-RGI, pardon me, that people do not want to live in them, we implemented market rent in some of these six towns just to see how we can utilize them. We have done some upgrades in Rapid City to utilize some of

our housing stock in that town, converting some of the units, the bachelors to one bedroom, so we have been able to try to get better usage that way.

These are some of the things that we are trying to do to get better utilization of our stock. We have the stock there. We have the ability to put people in them. It is just a matter of people having the confidence that the housing stock that we have for them is of a quality that they would want to live in. It is something that is ongoing. We continue to work towards that. The member mentioned about an updated list for the surplus. We can provide an updated list on that which she has, whether there are any new units that we are looking at. So these are some of the other areas that we can work towards.

**Ms. Cerilli:** How quickly can you get me that list?

**Mr. Reimer:** We should be able to have it within a week for sure.

**Ms. Cerilli:** One of the other areas that is a real concern in this whole issue of privatizing or selling off what is deemed surplus properties is what seems to be a real focus and trend on getting rid of the single-family or duplexes. I am wondering if that is a specific policy objective and if the minister has concerns about that, if he has discussed this with any of the community groups that have been dealing with this and he can share with me his perspective on that.

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the advantages of being the Minister of Housing and also the Minister of Seniors is that I get a chance to do some touring around to some of the seniors groups in seniors homes and seniors projects in various parts of Manitoba and various towns and also meeting, at the same time, with some of the local town's council and town's alderman or reeves and talking to them. Naturally when they find out that I am Housing minister, they will always direct their comments to some of the housing stock that may be in and around their town.

A lot of the direction is towards the local town wanting to buy the stock, buy the single-family homes or the duplexes that are in these towns, and I have no problems with that if the local town wants to take it upon themselves to provide a place of residence for

some of their senior citizens or some of their townspeople to stay in their town. They look at it as an asset that they can utilize instead of its being vacant which sometimes it is because of our restrictions because of the RGI. A lot of people will not live in those units. So they say to me, well, can we buy these units and then we can do whatever we want with them. I am of the opinion that, if it is for the betterment of the town and the townspeople feel that they can rent them out to people who are in need, whether it is seniors or young families that are wanting to move to the area, we should try to accommodate them.

Our first option in any type of sale of a piece of property is usually to the person that is living in it, and if they do not want it, why then we will offer it to I believe it is the neighbour next and then from the neighbour it will go to the town for a decision and then it will go to one of our government departments, like Natural Resources or Highways or something like that. They may want to utilize it for a residence maybe for part of their work crew, and then we will post it ourselves, I believe, public tender. Then from there, if we do not get any response, it goes to a listing. It goes to at least half a dozen various channels before it becomes listed with Royal LePage or something like that.

It has been pointed out that it is following what is similar in all government departments, under the general manual of administration.

\* (1520)

**Ms. Cerilli:** I appreciate your telling me this sort of process that you go through, but it still seems like the issue is that the government is initiating this process, that you are the ones that are looking to divest the single-family dwellings as a priority. That is what I am wanting to confirm, if that is what is happening, if you are initiating this and if you are trying to focus on these kinds of properties because you think they are easier to sell. What is the policy direction here?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, it is not targeted towards one specific area or whether it is single-family units or duplexes. We will review all our portfolio in all components, but it is not geared towards one particular area.

**Ms. Cerilli:** You have gone into some description about the way it has been handled in rural areas where the municipality is approaching you with some interest, and I have here a whole range of communities, Birtle, Cartwright, Churchill, Manitou, all sorts of communities. But then we get to Winnipeg and there are a lot more single-family units, and I cannot imagine that the City of Winnipeg is knocking on your door wanting to buy these properties. So what is the story on the city of Winnipeg? There are 18—this is again from '95—single-family units in the Wolseley area, 14 in Brooklands—actually more than that in the Wolseley area and then some out in sort of the north end. Who is purchasing these properties in Winnipeg? What is the policy direction in that area? What is your goal in this area?

**Mr. Reimer:** The units that have been referred to are usually very small homes, very old homes, where the maintenance and the upkeep on them have become very high. The realization of continuance with these homes, the decision is made that we will offer them for sale, and if there is an interest in them, then we would sell them.

What I can do for the member is also provide an updated list. I was asking whether we had a number on the amount of units that we have sold since the list that you have. We can get that list and get an updated list for you. The numbers that are there may still be fairly the same, because I do not know how many of these units here have sold. But we can find out, and I can get you an updated list as to the numbers that have sold.

I have been told that usually these are fairly old, turn-of-the-century homes. In fact, not-turn-of-the-century, I guess they are very old—'50s and '60s. In fact I think we have some homes that were just after the Second World War, wartime houses they are called, and those are being sold too.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I guess that the concern in this area, particularly in the areas that I described—Brooklands, the Wolseley area and the north end—where there is a real problem with stability for family housing, when you have public housing that provides for low-income families to be able to have some ability to stay in that area, it is very important to the community. I know that I have sent letters and drawn this to the minister's

attention on a few occasions. I visited the homes around the Arlington area, in particularly Evanson. There were a number of properties that were being sold, and they had tenants in them. The tenants did not want to move.

The whole issue—I think the minister even raised this in his opening statement—the importance of having stable housing so that kids can stay in one neighbourhood, go to one school for a number of years, and how that adds to their quality of life, their health, their education, their whole future. When I just add up the number of single-family units, there are 55 units from that one year that were being divested, and how many of those are in some of those neighbourhoods? That is having a real impact on those neighbourhoods. These inner-city areas want to have low-income, family-sized dwellings so that they can maintain a support for those families to stay in those communities.

There is the whole problem in some areas of the kids transferring enrollment in a school by 100 percent. In some inner-city schools, their entire enrollment turns over in one school year, and it is all related to the availability of having housing for the size of some of these families to meet their needs. So I think that is the argument for maintaining some of these single-family dwellings in the Winnipeg areas, especially when we know that there is no new money for social housing coming down the pipe, especially when you are also eliminating funding for some of the rent supplement programs. So we are running into a situation where there are going to be fewer options for low-income families, especially if they have more than two children, two or three children.

I guess what I am doing is trying to make a plea or a pitch to have that considered. I know that there are a number of community groups in that area now that are concerned about this. They have contacted me, and they do not want to lose any more single-family dwellings that are owned by MHA in that community. If this is being considered at all in your department as you are setting your priorities—I mean, you have talked about what your mandate is and we have talked about issues around safety. Well, if there are certain neighbourhoods where there are no criteria on who buys these kind of properties and they are bought up and they are divided into smaller suites or bought by

people who want to use them as a rental property and then they are divided up and rented off as boarding houses or even just small apartments, that is going to contribute to the kind of decay in some of these core area neighbourhoods, where we want to see some families be able to stay in there and stay involved in schools and all the other things I have described.

\* (1530)

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that the member is alluding to a lot of things that we talked about before as regarding the stability of the community, and one of the things naturally with any type of sense of community that is built is the residents themselves and the fact that they stay in the one particular area and they become part of the community. The units that have been alluded to are units that are not torn down. They are units that stay within the community's single-family dwellings, and they become still part of the community. It can give enhanced community values when you have people who take ownership of their dwelling and they become part of the community that way, too. But anything that enhances community development or a sense of community is something that I think we look as positive aspects of a community, because you do not get this high turnover in schools and you do not get this constant migration of the young people from school to school.

I would think that in social housing we have always tried to accommodate people in part of the community. We are looking at trying to go to possibly even a market-rent type of philosophy with some of these units to encourage people to stay in there, so it is the role models of people who can get out and work, get a job and show their neighbours that there is a better way to do things. So there are different ways to promote community unity. I think we can try to work towards those things in utilizing our housing stock the best way we can.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Can the minister tell me if they have done any tracking of some of the properties that have been sold in the past, just specifically the single-family dwellings, to see how many of them have been bought and are now being used as rental property, and if they are being divided into a number of suites? I mean, I am not suggesting, as the minister said, that they are being

torn down, but I think that would be interesting to find out.

**Mr. Reimer:** It has been pointed out, we have never really done a follow-up in the sense as to how that property has evolved since or if it was sold. So we really do not have that type of information to give any type of definitive answer as to how it ends up, where it ends up, whether it gets subdivided, or how it is utilized after it is sold. A lot of these are very small units, small homes. Some of them would most likely still be single-family homes.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I was just saying the ones that I have been in, particularly in the Wolseley area, are big homes. They are single-family dwellings, but they have four bedrooms and three storeys. Maybe some of the ones in the rural areas are different; they may be bungalows and smaller. I am not disputing that.

Considering that the minister is also the Minister of Urban Affairs, I mean this is a real big issue. I was going to get into this sort of later when we are talking more about the research division. The whole concern is that there is not a lot of attention being paid to certain neighbourhoods in the core area. Even in other parts of the city where there is an increase in the number of properties that are slum housing, they are scooped up by absentee landlords to become rental properties, divided into small apartments. In many instances, the owner, the landlord, is bringing in rent from low-income people more than twice what they are paying on the mortgage. This is how a lot of people are making a lot of money on the backs of people who are really economically disadvantaged.

I would hate to see that Manitoba Housing Authority is contributing to that by selling them properties that are, prior to that, being lived in by families who are low income or are using all of those five bedrooms for their family. So I would like the minister to respond to that to make sure that is not happening. I am going to get into this a bit more in the research area. I think this is a whole other area that someone in the government has to look at, either through Urban Affairs or through Housing to try and deal with this trend. There are all sorts of other options we could talk about in terms of how to provide affordable housing for families, because that is not a way to do it by having that kind of model



where it is these landlords that are able to really not maintain their properties.

Oftentimes it is millions and millions of dollars in social allowance that is going into these housing apartments or into these inner-city neighbourhoods. That money is not staying in that neighbourhood, it is all leaving, because the landlords certainly do not live there and the owners of the properties. As I said they are often taking in rent on those properties twice as much or more than they are paying on the mortgage because of the many apartments that they have got the house divided up into. What ends up happening is that people that are living there on low income, they have paid the mortgage. This is happening in Manitoba Housing Authority properties as well. They have lived there for 25 years; they have more than paid for the mortgage. They have nothing to show for it, but it is a real concern if Manitoba Housing Authority is going to start contributing to that problem by selling their properties to individuals that are going to use them for that kind of entrepreneurial activity—I say with tongue in cheek.

**Mr. Reimer:** Well, I guess, when you look at the sale of some of the homes and units and things like that, to a degree you hope that it has been bought by people that are consciously wanting to stay in the area. There is an awful lot of more private ownership that are using their units for subdivision—or not so much subdivision, but for multiple tenant use and things like that. We, in Manitoba Housing, naturally can use our guidelines and our parameters of occupancy in how many people are in our units. Once the unit is in private ownership, the only regulations that can dictate then are the City of Winnipeg's zoning regulations and occupancies of that line where there can be restrictions put on for use as a tenement house or a rooming house or something like that. That would have to come into effect through the City of Winnipeg zoning applications.

We are not slum landlords. We are very conscientious of the efforts that the staff and the department put out in trying to maintain the quality of our units. Once they move off our stream of public ownership into private ownership, we do not have the authority to dictate who or what lives in there other than how that person so chooses to change it. If he or she decides to change it and they want to make it into

a rooming home, I would think that they have to go through the normal channels of zoning in the city and get applications. The neighbours have an opportunity for input, for public presentation and hearings on whether they want that particular building to make that type of change. I do not know how we as a government or as a Housing department can have that type of direct say as to what a private individual can do or cannot do with their home once they purchase it.

\* (1540)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I must say that after seeing what occurred with Behnke Road where you tore down perfectly good housing—or it has not been torn down yet, I understand it is still there—but, you know, it is going to be torn down so that Home Depot can build a parking lot, and it is perfectly good housing that had just had a few thousand dollars of renovations put in. I am not surprised by your answer, but I do not know if legally you could also put something in the offer to purchase or the sale agreement that required it to be maintained as a single-family dwelling to avoid the problem that I am getting at. So really that is something else that you can look into, and I am wondering if you would agree to that.

**Mr. Reimer:** Sure.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am wanting to get into a few specific questions then while we are talking about this whole area of sale of Manitoba Housing Authority properties. I have a few that have been brought to my attention. First of all, I will start with the rural area. I noticed from being in Portage la Prairie that, on the one hand, there was some very large modernization improvements going on. They seem to have a lot of social public housing in Portage la Prairie. Then on the other hand there were a whole two streets I believe that had been sold, and I am just wanting for the minister to confirm if that is the case and if he can tell me who those properties were sold to and what the value of the sale was.

**Mr. Reimer:** I believe the units that the member is referring to are what they call Chelsea Terrace in Portage la Prairie, and that was 77 units that were sold at that time. They were a complex that was built in the 1960s. There were also, I believe in the 1980s, some

sold to the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council. There were 11 units sold at that time to the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council. Are there any other questions on that?

**Ms. Cerilli:** So what was the vacancy rate in that complex prior to it being sold?

**Mr. Reimer:** You know, this complex here was operating under what we refer to as market rate rental and not RGI. The vacancy rate at the time was somewhere around 4 or 5 percent vacancy when it was sold. It was scheduled, as mentioned, being a fairly old complex built in the '60s, it was requiring more and more maintenance and upkeep. So there was a decision made to see whether there was the possibility of realization of moneys owing against it and whether there was an interest. It was put through the process of offering for sale, and there was a purchaser that came forth and bought it from us.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Besides the Ojibway Tribal Council.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, that is true.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Could you tell me who that other purchaser was?

**Mr. Reimer:** It was a numbered company.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Who were the principal owners?

**Mr. Reimer:** I have been told that we were dealing with an agent. We do not have those names here, but I imagine we can get them for the member.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I would appreciate that. The tenants, there was a fairly low vacancy rate there then when it was sold, so your whole sort of formula or rationale that we just discussed in terms of declaring units surplus seems to not completely apply there. I mean, 4 percent vacancy is not too bad, so I am wondering what happened there in terms of the criteria or the assessment process and what happened to all those tenants. Are they still there? How does the rent compare now for those tenants now?

**Mr. Reimer:** I have been told that the increase in rents would fall under The Residential Tenancies Act, so the rent is controlled to an extent that way. There are 20 of

the units that are still under the RGI formula, so they would stay under that formula while they are still in residence at this complex. The vacancy rate that the member mentioned, too, as talked about before, was part of the decision making in looking at coming to decisions on this property, but also other factors were brought into play. One of the factors was the fact that the maintenance and upkeep on it was very significant, and it was felt that was a prime consideration in looking at some sort of proposal for devolution of this particular unit.

So it is a combination of events. It is not only the vacancy rate, but it is also the market conditions, the building conditions, the maintenance program that is associated with the building, the upkeep. There are many factors that are brought into consideration before it is considered for sale.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay, but my question was, at least 21 of the units are still the existing tenants that were there when the sale took place, but there was a total of 77 units, so it sounds like there could have been a lot of other tenants that moved after this, or some of them may be there but now they are just—

**Mr. Reimer:** No, I have been told that the existing tenants are still there. The number that I was referring to, the 20, was 20 of them are still on the RGI formula.

\* (1550)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, this is really getting confusing because I thought you said that one of the reasons that this development was sold was because it was on a market-rent system.

**Mr. Reimer:** I should have been a little bit more definitive. It had a combination of market rent and RGI. I just alluded to one of them.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay, well, let us go through the same series of questions then in terms of some of the properties in Winnipeg: 1585 Notre Dame Avenue, Milton Court, I believe it is called. It is four apartment blocks that each have 15 units. Has that been declared surplus? What is the situation there in terms of vacancy, and is it in the process of being declared surplus?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, it has not been declared surplus.

**Ms. Cerilli:** But is it in the process of being considered?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, not at this time.

**Ms. Cerilli:** How long does it take for something to go from not at this time being considered to being sold, or to being considered and being declared surplus?

**Mr. Reimer:** Well, that sounded like a bit of a vague question when I said, "not at this time," but we have no immediate plans to declare 1585 surplus or to go through the procedure. The member must remember that, even though sometimes these units may have a designation of being surplus, that does not necessarily mean that they will be sold because market dictates will say whether there is a sale for it.

More importantly, the pragmatic approach is that we are not in the business to just sell things just for the sake of getting rid of them, because, as pointed out, a lot of these units have a tremendous amount of mortgage applied against them and we have to be able to justify any type of large discrepancy between what has come forth as a purchase price and what is on the books as an outstanding mortgage. Government prudent management dictates that we have to pay off that mortgage because CMHC wants their money. So, even though we theoretically, and just hypothetically if we had a unit that all we can get for it is, say, \$400,000 and it has got an outstanding mortgage of \$650,000 or \$700,000 still on it, common sense would say, hey, we cannot eat that amount of money. Our Treasury Board will not allow us to just go out and holus-bolus sell off these properties. There has to be either a break-even, or a very, very close break-even, point or realization of the monies that we are asking for and what are coming back.

There are not that many units that can carry themselves in a sense of being in a position where the mortgage is paid off. There are not that many because with a portfolio of approximately 18,000 units and an outstanding mortgage of \$350 million when most of them were built in the '70s, there is still an awful lot of money owing on an awful lot of our properties. So it is prudent for us to get the best utilization from those

monies, and the declaring of surplus is not something that is going to be a great source of revenue for this government because there is just too much money outstanding. The long-term mortgages that are outstanding, and the fact that the CMHC wants their money, no matter what happens, their first dollar out, makes decision making in selling units very, very tenuous at times as to try to rationalize selling things just for the sake of selling them when there are such huge losses, potential losses that can be associated with trying to clear the mortgage off. So being declared surplus and actually being realized on a sale sometimes are far, far apart.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I guess I would add to that, it is hard to rationalize these decisions, or make these decisions, when there is also such a large need for low-income housing.

I am going to ask a couple of questions here maybe that are more policy related then and not so much just dealing with the whole privatization and the specifics that we have been, but how then does the government deal with a position put forward by an organization like AIM, the Apartment Investors Association of Manitoba? They see Manitoba Housing Authority and Manitoba Housing as in competition with them. They see it as an unfair competition, that subsidized housing is unfair competition in the market housing. How does the minister respond to that?

**Mr. Reimer:** I guess, government will always have a social responsibility to look after people that cannot look after themselves. One of the responsibilities of government is to be there for the people that are in need, or that are in a destitute situation, because of circumstances either controlled or uncontrolled that they find themselves in a situation where they have to have housing or lodging. Through the last while, through governments, we have been there to provide housing.

In the '70s and '80s when the federal government was involved on a 50-50 cost-shared basis and there was an expansion, public housing was there set up as a vehicle for people to get into housing as they move through their economic cycle of life, to move on to better housing, upgraded housing or a different type of housing. Public housing was there as a vehicle to move

through. What has evolved is that public housing has become more social housing.

I believe almost 65 or 70 percent of our housing stock is with people on social assistance. An even higher percentage is single parents, usually the female as the head of the house in our housing. In fact, I think I alluded to statistics in my opening comments. Our position has been that there is a need, there is a value for government, to be there in this time of personal crisis or family crisis in providing housing. We do not shirk our responsibility away from there. I think what is coming to fruition in extent is the fact that we are now faced with a situation where we have an awful lot of units. We have about 18,000 units under Manitoba Housing.

\* (1600)

We have been faced with the fact that the federal government is now wanting to devolve itself completely out of their social housing. They are wanting the Manitoba government to take over their 17,000 or 18,000 units and a mortgage portfolio of around \$650 million. We are looking at a potential of a portfolio of over 36,000 units and an outstanding mortgage of about a billion dollars that the taxpayers of Manitoba would take on as their responsibility for fulfilment. These are enormous challenges and changes that the taxpayers of Manitoba have to come to some sort of reckoning on.

I guess, what we are doing is we are taking a position of standing back for a moment and saying, where is the best utilization of these units? We are recognizing the fact that there is a need in Manitoba for social housing, but to what degree, to what depth, to what involvement and to what time? What is the best utilization of our resources? Some of our resources are old. They are getting worn out. Some of them were built shortly after the Second World War, the so-called wartime houses, where they were just clapboards. A tremendous amount of cost involved with units in heating them and keeping them upgraded is just astronomical.

You are dealing with people on fixed income; more and more people are moving into our social housing. So the evaluation of our social policy and our housing policy is ongoing. I think that it is just something that—

### Point of Order

**Ms. Cerilli:** On a point of order, I just want to bring the minister back around to my question, which is: How does he deal with the position of the Apartment Investors Association of Manitoba that are saying that Manitoba Housing is unfair competition?

I do not know if this is the answer he gives to AIM when they talk to him, but I am just wanting to get him to specifically answer my question.

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Reimer:** I was trying to bring it into context, I guess. Maybe I was getting on a little bit different direction. But I guess the association of apartment owners will always have a concern actually, because we are to a degree in the housing business, setting up with our rental programs and our facilities for utilization by people. I do not get lobbied or overly lobbied to an extent. I am not too sure what type of overtures they make to the department.

I think that they recognize that our responsibility is geared towards a certain aspect of Manitoba population. I do not get that much exposure or criticism from them in the way we take in our social housing programs.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Given everything that we have just been discussing though about the process for assessing the sale of certain properties that Manitoba Housing is responsible for and owns, what we were discussing as well about the problems in the inner city in providing low-income housing on the market, problems we discussed about some of the ways that I would say that low-income people get taken advantage of in the market. Basically, it is difficult to make a profit on housing low-income people if you are going to have housing that meets standards. I am wondering if the minister agrees with that and sort of sees that way back when we first developed social housing in Manitoba and in Canada, it was because there was that recognition that the market cannot necessarily provide

decent housing for a large segment of the population, whether they are seniors or single parents or disabled people or other families that qualify for social housing.

**Mr. Reimer:** I guess the history of public housing is something that is a study in itself as to why government got involved with public housing. I believe it is along the lines of trying to fill a need and a purpose in the community for giving people this opportunity to have housing.

How it has evolved and when it was first brought into the market, I believe it was along the lines of what the member is referring to. There was a void, if you want to call it, in the housing market where there was no adequate public housing or people that could not afford to get into their own homes or their own accommodations. This was their stepping stone, if you want to call it. If you get into public housing, you are into it for so many months or years. Then what it does is it gives you the stability to build your economic base, so that you can possibly move on to a bigger and better home, and to accommodations that you want as your own. So I guess that is more or less the philosophy of public housing in all areas, and this is how they got into it. When there was a lot of money around in the '70s and there was the ability to build and there was the ability to have partnerships with the federal government, there was a natural fit for the expansion of this, you know, public housing. So it worked well at that time. Times change, dictates come forth that say that you cannot do that anymore, you cannot afford to be the sole provider. You can be there as the safety net, and I think this is why public housing is changing so much where we now have a lot of elderly people in there, we have a lot of social allowance people in public housing. These are the areas that, especially with seniors, are going to grow and are going to take a new—not so much a new—but a recognition that that is the need of these people that we in public housing are going to have to try to accommodate.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I wonder if that is when you do get called by AIM if that is what you are going to say, because I have talked to them and seen them at different events or met with them. Perhaps more of their pressure is being applied on the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe) that deals with the Residential Tenancies Branch, but, you know, I think from this,

from what the minister has said, it seems like some of the decisions that were made in the past, and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) alluded to this the other day, that some of this housing was set up to be transition housing to sort of help people through a period when they were on a low income, thinking that they would somehow be able to sock some money away and then be able to get out and on to the market. That has not occurred to a large extent.

Actually, that policy objective has been problematic when it has been tied to the rent geared to income, meaning that then those very people that are starting to be able to save some money, because they have gotten a job or a better-paying job, that does not happen because they lose the money to increase in their rent. So those people move out, and then what you end up happening is this high turnover in some of these large developments which destabilizes the community, and we get into all those other issues we were talking about earlier.

\* (1610)

The minister is nodding in agreement that this is a problem, and I am wondering what is going on in the department to try and deal with that, to address this, that there are two conflicting policy objectives here in the sense of the need to stabilize communities and have more success in managing this social and public housing, but then at the same time continuing on with the rent geared to income policy and considering to have the tenancies be temporary. I talk to people in public housing often who have been there a very long time, and that was never the intention you are saying. So how is the department dealing with this?

**Mr. Reimer:** Now I think that the conversation is a good conversation, because I think that I can agree with the member on that in the sense that you have people that because of their circumstances they are moving ahead in their economic cycle, and they are able to enjoy more money, if you want to call it, in their income, and then, because of our formula, RGI, we charge more for their rent. Especially in some of the large complexes, what you want to do is you want to build a degree of stability into that complex. If it means keeping that person or people around and they are making a little bit more money, I do not know why we are penalizing them in a sense because, if anything,

they set up a role model. They set up the ability for other people to look towards these people and, not only that, these people have the opportunity to participate more in that community.

We are setting up a trial market rent here in the city with Columbus Courts, and maybe it is time we looked at expanding it to other areas of the city and maybe we look at an area like Gilbert Park or we look at an area like Lord Selkirk Park to build a sense of stability in there. Those are unique areas in Winnipeg—Gilbert Park, Selkirk Park, The Maples complex. They are communities in themselves, and maybe it is time we look at setting up maybe a pilot project in one or two of those two projects with a market-rent formula to try to encourage not only people to stay in that area but to also give them the ability to be part of that community. I have no problem in possibly looking at something like that. I think that it is a good suggestion and something that I will be pursuing with the department to see whether we can expand on that.

I will have to get solicitation, to a degree, from my federal counterparts because of the fact that we are in partnership with our feds on these two projects, but I think that sometimes you have to be the instigator and the initiator of something like this. If there is a willingness to make it happen we should be trying to pursue it, because I think that it is a valid, strong approach and a good approach that we should be taking with some of these areas, because sometimes these areas need different approaches than the norm. If the norm is going to prevent a community from expanding and correcting itself and becoming a better community, then we should change our attitude and our direction so that we can try to accommodate that.

I will be pursuing this further with the department to see why and how we can pursue it in the best way so we can get to some sort of resolve on it, because it is a good suggestion.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay. I want to go back just asking about some of the specific communities, and I want to ask a little bit about Gimli. It seems to be a region where there are some different things going on in terms of the Manitoba Housing Authority and management and maybe just to start up asking the general question of the minister. What is going on in Gimli?

**Mr. Reimer:** What we have done in Gimli is we have moved that office to Selkirk. We have moved two staff to Selkirk. We have kept two staff in Gimli. They are working out of one of our complexes there. One is a maintenance co-ordinator and the other is the tenant relations officer in that area, but the office in Gimli per se has been closed.

**Ms. Cerilli:** It seems like there were a number of procedures that changed in this area. So the minister is telling me that basically four staff are responsible for that area. Two of them are working out of Selkirk now. Two of them are working in Gimli out of one of the housing units. I guess, some of the questions that I have where some of the people that are working under them as caretakers, I understand that there have been some changes in the way that the contracts for caretakers are being issued. I am wondering why the Manitoba Housing Authority changed the contract system of agreeing to contracts for two years to going to a one-year contract with the tendering process every year.

**Mr. Reimer:** The feeling was that to have a live-in caretaker to get some sort of stability and sense of ownership, if you want to call it, in the complex that they are working with, it was better to offer them a two-year contract. It gives the sense of stability not only to the individual but also to the tenants of the association so that there is an identification with this person. If they are not live-in caretakers, then it is a one-year contract that we sign up with them.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So there seems to have been some problems and conflicts when this change occurred. Why were the caretakers that were working there not given the first chance to apply for those positions?

\* (1620)

**Mr. Reimer:** Being, as mentioned, on a yearly basis, they are done on a tender basis. They go out on open tender for the caretakers' jobs. This is not just for the Gimli area. This is a policy for all our Manitoba complexes and that. The person that is doing the job has just as much ability to resubmit his or her tender into the qualifications when it comes up, and it is done on a normal process. As I say, if they are live-in, it is

for two years, and if it is not a live-in caretaker, then it is done on a yearly basis.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I think there are all sorts of questions that I could ask about this. I do not want to get bogged down on this detail, but it seems to me that if you want stability that you do not have year-to-year contracting occurring—I do not know what the criteria are. I guess, the size of the development decides if it is going to be a live-in or not, but I understand there are also some changes in the configuration of the property areas dealing with Winnipeg Beach, Gimli and Fraserwood. Why were those areas changed where the caretakers are working?

**Mr. Reimer:** The member is referring to stability of turnover. I alluded to it the other day. The rate of turnover is approximately about 15 percent in our workforce, and a lot of it is to a degree not only in caretaker area but in our other areas. If the people are doing a commendable job when it comes to tendering, a lot of times these people just stay on year after year after year in their purpose. I do not know whether there is that much turnover in our normal operations of caretaking, so I think it is all the degree of interpretation as to how many, what type of differences there is for amount of turnover in the areas.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Was the contract broken for the Fraserwood area caretaking? Did that require the department to essentially pay double for this contract, because they then had to pay for both the new person as well as the other person, to comply with their legal requirements to pay the previous caretaker because there was violation of contract?

**Mr. Reimer:** I am not privy to the total amount of detail regarding Fraserwood, but I have been told that there was an overlap of double payment for approximately four months or so. We do not have the total amount of details as to what transpired, other than there was an overlap of about four months where we had to pay one caretaker while we had another one on.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Was Premier Filmon's special assistant's brother hired on a lower contract bid to undercut that caretaker? Is that individual still there?

**Mr. Reimer:** I do not believe that individual is with Manitoba Housing now.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Just to confirm then, the special assistant's brother was hired at a lower bid?

**Mr. Reimer:** I am not familiar with the detail. I would have to get more detail on that. I just do not know.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay. The caretakers that are on the contracts, are they considered to be self-employed? Are they responsible for providing their own equipment and supplies and all that kind of thing?

**Mr. Reimer:** They are required to supply their own hand tools, but as for equipment like lawnmowers and things like that, that is not a requirement. They are hired as an independent contractor in the truest sense and, like I mentioned, the only requirement is hand tools that they bring into the job by themselves.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am just trying to see from my notes here, the name of the condominium that was in Gimli, where there has been in the past some involvement with Manitoba Housing Authority. I am not sure if this was one that was declared surplus and it has been turned into a condo. Can the minister confirm that? It is Aspen Park, that is the one.

**Mr. Reimer:** The complex that the member is referring to is called Aspen Park in Gimli, and there were approximately 190 units in this complex. Of those units we still retain 22 units of the complex under Manitoba Housing, and most of these units were acquired originally because of foreclosures that came about in that particular area. So we still have some units in there, but we have sold—just getting a bit of redirection on my answer here. We took over those units through Government Services which were part of the old military base. This is how we came into possession of those units and now we have slowly devolved them, so of the original units, there are still 22 that are in our portfolio.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So you said that you have devolved them, but you have sold them and now they are operating as condos, is that correct?

**Mr. Reimer:** That is correct.

**Ms. Cerilli:** And just to further clarify, you acquired that property because it had been with the base there?

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes.

\* (1630)

**Ms. Cerilli:** So the base basically sold it to Manitoba Housing, the Housing Renewal Corporation, and then you, in turn, are selling them as private units?

**Mr. Reimer:** I believe we took them over—the government turned them over to Government Services, and then from Government Services they went to Manitoba Housing and now they are being devolved as condominiums.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I have just had it brought to my attention though that there is a lack of affordable housing in Gimli. Particularly, we have had it drawn to our attention that women that are working in the Women's Resource Centre there are finding that the Manitoba Housing Authority properties that do exist are not conveniently located close to shopping and other amenities, and women with small children, particularly if they recently have left violent situations, that they are basically stranded. They have no public transit out there and there has been an agreement with Manitoba Housing Authority that they would provide a certain number of units for women in that community, and there is a real problem there in terms of on the ground actually having it be a workable agreement or a workable situation.

I just want to clarify then, if this condo, if those units were actually closer to the downtown, if you want to call it that, of Gimli, if that has been adding to the problem?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think the member is aware that where we are talking about these units is outside of town. Aspen Park is not right in Gimli. It is a little ways out. With the 22 units available for public housing or for public use, in a sense, I could not speculate as to—we do not have the exact numbers on what is vacant and what is available but, if there is an application that these individuals fill out and specify that they would want to be in Aspen Park, we would try to accommodate them in trying to locate them there as space is available. So

I can only offer those units for usage for the resource centre.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am just conferring with my colleagues here. We actually have an agreement that they are going to take over at 4:30.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Chairperson, I gave notice the other day about questions that I have on Flora Place, and I am wondering if the minister either has the answers ready or if he would like me to repeat the questions and then I will get the answers one way or the other.

**Mr. Reimer:** It would be easier if the member asked me the questions. Then I will know what the answers can be.

**Mr. Martindale:** Could the minister tell me what the assessment of the condition of houses—we may be switching critics momentarily, but until we get the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) back I will continue. Could the minister tell us what the assessment of the condition of the housing units is by Manitoba Housing Authority for the houses on Flora Place?

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes. I know the member for Burrows has been quite active in correspondence and with conversations with myself regarding Flora Place and the best utilization of this piece of property. Flora Place, as he is aware, is a complex that is 55 years old. They range in condition from poor to fair in the units. There have been evaluations done on the units. There seem to be figures estimated that to bring these units into a reasonable state of repair with the new infrastructure, which is sidewalks, storm sewers, drainage sewers and everything else. that would average out to almost \$55,000 per unit or almost \$5.5 million.

As to where and what should be done with these units, I think the member is aware that we have initiated talks with Habitat For Humanity to see whether there was some sort of partnership that we could try to come up with in redeveloping that area and retaining the uniqueness of the area. I do not know exactly where that conversation is. The partnership that is involved with that complex is a 75-25 partnership, where that 25 percent partnership is even split in half between the city and the province. So we are actually a 12.5 percent



partner in this complex. That does not mean that we still do not want to try to come to some sort of better resolve on it. But, as I mentioned, I do not know whether there has been any further commitments by Habitat to join in any type of partnership on it.

We have asked them to come up with a proposal, and they have asked for an extension on it. So there has been nothing formalized. I can make the commitment to the member that if and when things start to happen within, I would certainly bring him into the conversations of it, because of his constituency, in trying to come to some sort of resolve on it. But it really is a unique area as to what is going to happen.

The city councillor in the area has worked with possibly other directions as to what might happen in there, but we will continue to try to work with Habitat and see whether they can come up with some sort of proposition or direction for that property.

**Mr. Martindale:** Does Manitoba Housing Authority have any plans to repair or upgrade the existing housing?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, not at this time.

**Mr. Martindale:** What is Manitoba Housing Authority's policy as people move out of those units?

**Mr. Reimer:** When people move out, what we have done is we have pulled the services out of there, the electrical services. We have boarded them up and mothballed them, I guess, for lack of a better commitment. Right now there are approximately 54 of the 100 units that are vacant.

**Mr. Martindale:** Could the minister repeat that please? Fifty-four are vacant out of?

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chair, 54 out of 100 are vacant.

**Mr. Martindale:** Are you negotiating with the other partners, the City of Winnipeg and/or CMHC, regarding any proposals that may have been received?

**Mr. Reimer:** There have been ongoing negotiations last year with a request for a proposal to be brought forth in October of last year. Habitat approached our

department and asked for an extension on that. Since that time, there have not been any overtures by Habitat to come forth with anything concrete at this time.

**Mr. Martindale:** I have been talking to Habitat, so I was aware of that. Is the minister aware that the Lions Housing Centre may be interested in something at Flora Place?

**Mr. Reimer:** I have not been aware of that, but with that bit of news I will certainly make the department make overtures to the Lions to see whether there is a possibility that we can make some sort of connection with them. I appreciate the members giving that information, because we would certainly get the department to follow up on that.

\* (1640)

**Mr. Martindale:** You said that the city councillor for the area, who is John Prystanski, may have other plans for Flora Place. I wonder what you are referring to.

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that in conversations he is of the concern too that we should be doing something with that property. He is concerned about the lack of utilization, the fact that there are the boarded-up buildings in there and whether there is better utilization through it from Habitat For Humanity. The last time, in talking to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey) civically, the city councillor had indicated that he had also talked to Habitat, but I do not know whether he is pursuing something on a different venue other than what we talked about regarding Habitat. I can only relay his enthusiasm that he would like to see something happen in there too.

**Mr. Martindale:** I am pleased to see that all of us, including the minister and the city councillor for the area, are in agreement, and that all of us believe that it would be quite appropriate to invite Habitat to present a proposal and that if it was accepted by the three levels of government that they might build new houses or renovate existing houses.

Does the minister have any problem with having townhousing, rowhousing, side-by-sides, other kinds of housing on that street other than single, detached?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that we would welcome any type of development in that area, whether it is duplexes or townhouses or anything that can sustain itself in there and generate people in the area. If it is housing and it is quality housing, I do not know whether there should be a differentiation of just sticking to strictly single-family housing in there.

I am not familiar entirely with the zoning regulations in there, whether it would have to be changed through the zoning applications from single-family to double or duplex or triplex or whatever, but that is something that maybe the councillor would be able to give us better direction as to whether there would be a conflict if we tried to change it.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, I believe my colleague the member for Osborne has a couple of questions, so I would like to allow her to go now.

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** I wonder if the minister could tell me if the Residential Tenancies has an aboriginal officer.

**Mr. Reimer:** I would think that the member would have to ask that of the Consumer and Corporate Affairs department because that is not in our jurisdiction. The Residential Tenancies Association is—yes.

**Ms. McGifford:** Then I would like to ask the minister if he could tell me if there is any wheelchair-accessible housing in Osborne.

**Mr. Reimer:** I am assuming you are saying public housing under our portfolio.

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes.

**Mr. Reimer:** Just a minute, we will check on it.

As to the accessibility of our housing, we ensure, especially if it is an apartment block or something like that, that naturally it has the elevators and the ramps for access. The units themselves, we try to accommodate possibly two or three units in our complexes that are wheelchair accessible. We are very cognizant of the needs of wheelchair accessibility with the handicapped, and it just becomes part of our standard approach to provide housing.

**Ms. McGifford:** So then the information that we have in my constituency office that there is no accessible housing in Osborne is not true.

**Mr. Reimer:** Definitely, because in the member's riding we do have a fair amount of public housing and public housing buildings that have elevators, that have ramps, that have apartment units that have been modified, so we do have that in her riding.

**Ms. McGifford:** One of the things that I wanted to bring up is that my constituency assistant, who does a lot of work with constituents in regard to housing, tells me that she has positive relations with Housing and she enjoys working with people, but she is also telling me that she has been told increasingly that she should only contact the minister's office. I am just wondering why this might be the case and why there is this need for secrecy.

**Mr. Reimer:** Jeepers, I actually would want it the other way around, that they would contact the office instead of the minister. I guess maybe there are certain situations where they feel that there is better access to the minister because I am just down the road from them, in a sense, from the member's constituency, but to be truthful I do not get very many requests or calls or complaints from the field. If they are addressed to me, they come to me. They are not, you know, filtered, if you want to call it, through my office. I have always made my office open to anybody that wanted to phone or to write me a letter. They do become visible to me, in a sense, but, as to ordinary problems and concerns, I have confidence in the staff; I have an excellent staff, not only in my office or in the administrative office, but in the field office, if you want to call it. I would hope that they can respond to a lot of the concerns that the member's constituents would have, and I would encourage them to do that. If they run into problems or they feel that they are not being addressed properly, naturally there is always further recourse into other levels of the department through our senior management and possibly even right to the minister, myself. In general, the staff handle a lot of the complaints in a very conscientious manner. I have the utmost confidence in my staff. If anything, I will say on the record that I believe I have got some of the best staff in government working in my department for what they do and how they perform their jobs.

**Ms. McGifford:** Thank you. I certainly was not criticizing the minister's staff, and that is why I prefaced my remarks by saying that my constituency assistant, who does a lot of work for constituents, had been very clear that working with people from Housing had been a very agreeable experience. She found people generally to be co-operative. She did not mean to suggest that when she had been told that calls had to go to the minister's office, people were being disagreeable. Her understanding was that there had been some sort of instruction that certain kinds of calls were to go not directly to the minister but to the minister's office. So now am I to understand that the minister is telling me that this is not his understanding, that there has been some miscommunication? Indeed, we are in a quandary anyway.

\* (1650)

**Mr. Reimer:** I would suggest that if there are calls regarding particular problems with the housing or anything, there is an avenue of recourse through the Manitoba Housing department itself in our central office. There is nothing wrong with the individual phoning my office directly to get direction. We direct people. A lot of times they will phone to the minister's office, because it is the handiest in the phone book. We will say that, well, maybe they should be phoning this office or that office. We will do that constantly as a clearing house, but usually if someone phones Manitoba Housing, whoever answers the phone has got the capability, and they will redirect that person to the appropriate department or individual that can help them. I would encourage them to do that. I think that is a very constructive way of trying to get resolve.

**Ms. McGifford:** Then I understand the minister to say that if somebody phones his office, his office will reroute that person so that person understands exactly where the call should go. If somebody phones Manitoba Housing on a housing issue, the issue will be solved at that level and not be referred to the minister's office.

**Mr. Reimer:** Right.

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to go back to Flora Place briefly, and then I have three other issues, time permitting. The current residents at Flora Place like

living there very much. One of the reasons is that many of them have been on social assistance for many years during which time they mostly lived in apartments. When they moved to Flora Place—for many of them, the first time they ever lived in a single, detached house was on Flora Place. They really like the privacy and they like having a yard. They like being able to keep pets. They like the fact that it is a dead-end street and a very quiet neighbourhood. That is one of the reasons why I have continued to promote their interests and promote new affordable housing.

Another reason is that we are continuing to lose population in the inner city. In fact, during the last redistribution of seats or change in provincial constituency boundaries, Burrows constituency for the first time went south of the CPR marshalling yards to Notre Dame. The reason was that they had to enlarge the boundaries physically in order to get the same number of people, roughly, in each provincial constituency. I believe that we should make use of available land for housing. Certainly with the 54 vacant lots, there is land available for new construction or some new form of housing. If the Lions or Habitat were involved, there may be no cost to government, which makes it pretty easy for the government to approve.

However, I think the biggest obstacle is the fact that there is no storm sewer. If you are going to put in new housing, probably there needs to be a new storm sewer, which probably means rebuilding the street, putting in curbs, putting in new sidewalks, getting rid of the ditches and improving the drainage. The cost of that could be quite high, as was indicated by the minister, in the cost per unit of building new units there. You know, if that cost is excessive, then probably no government wants to take it on, especially if the City of Winnipeg ends up being responsible for all the street and sewer improvements, and that is not, or cannot be, cost-shared with other levels of government. I am wondering, just briefly, if the minister would agree with that assessment.

**Mr. Reimer:** Pretty well. I think that the member recognizes that the federal government has pulled out entirely of their cost-sharing of public housing, and what it does is it puts a tremendous burden on the provincial government if we want to pick up the other

half of the equation. What is making it even more tenuous right now is the fact that the federal government now wants to pull entirely out of the social and the public housing sector, which even makes it more of a challenge for us here in Manitoba to recognize what the direction is going to happen.

The member is right when he alludes to the sewer and water and the storm retention ditches and everything that would have to go into Flora Place to make it into a standard that is acceptable in today's housing market, if you want to call it. The only avenue of possible optimism, if you want to call it, to get it developed to a degree is possibly through the infrastructure program.

There are possible other avenues of development through the Winnipeg Development Agreement. There are various components in the Winnipeg Development Agreement that I would have to—I am speaking with my other hat now, my Urban Affairs hat. We would have to look at the various components of sectors of involvement of availability of funding in there, and that is something that I do not think has been pursued. Maybe what I can do for the member is get a copy of the Winnipeg Development Agreement and all the various components where the funding possibly could be allocated from, and whether, because it is a \$75-million program for Winnipeg, 25, 25 and 25, we each have various components of the agreement that have strategic funding placements. I am just speculating. There may be something in that agreement that can be pursued.

**Mr. Martindale:** I want to thank the Minister of Housing for all his information and I will pass it on to Habitat For Humanity.

There is a seniors building in Burrows constituency at 114 McGregor called Saint Josaphat Selo. I understand they have 14 vacancies. I believe they are all in bachelor suites. I am wondering what Manitoba Housing Authority is doing to try and solve this problem and to fill up bachelor suites.

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the things that we have initiated that I alluded to with the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) is we have set up a marketing team. One of the things that the marketing team has been charged with is

trying to identify areas where there are consistent high vacancies and what we can do to try to market these units. They have had very good success. Fred Tipping Place on Osborne, and the other one was 125 Carriage Road, where this team—there are two ladies—go in and they literally go into that particular community and they market these units for occupancy. At Fred Tipping Place, they brought down the vacancy in a very short period of I think it was 2 months, from 37 units down to 4 units. This possibly should be one that we target for this marketing team to go into. Maybe what I will do is I will refer it to the staff to take note of that and, as this team is moving through the city, we can maybe target that area and see whether we can try to get more people into that unit.

**Mr. Martindale:** I thank the minister for that answer and I guess I will give notice for the next question. It is my understanding that an exception has been made to the previous policy of restricting seniors buildings to people 55 years and older and, I guess, in an effort to fill up some of these buildings, people under 55 are being admitted.

The result is that I have had a number of complaints, mainly from two different buildings. One is the seniors high rise at Lord Selkirk development in Point Douglas constituency and the other is Monash Manor in Kildonan constituency, and the specific complaints have to do with partying by tenants and/or their friends or relatives. I know of one person that moved out of Monash Manor because of this.

I am wondering if the minister believes that there is a problem with this policy of admitting people under the age of 55, if you or Manitoba Housing Authority have had complaints or difficulties and if you attribute it to this new policy?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** The hour is now 5 p.m., and I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee for private members' hour. The committee will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** Good afternoon, would the Committee of Supply come to order please. This section of the Committee of Supply

has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Natural Resources. Would the minister's staff enter the Chamber at this time. Thank you.

We were on Resolution 12.3 (f) Wildlife (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$283,700.

\* (1450)

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** I know I am not exactly on the same line item as perhaps I should be, but I am wondering if the minister would entertain a few questions that came to mind.

Actually this weekend I had office hours in Flin Flon this Saturday. A very distraught constituent came up to me. His concern was that he has licence to fish-farm three small lakes around Flin Flon. He has access to the two smaller lakes. There is another, a third lake that has road access, but he is denied road access because the mine was once owned by Granges Exploration Limited, I believe is the name of the outfit. The mine is now defunct, but the road is still there, I believe some 14 kilometres. Now this little lake is four kilometres up that road, but there is a gate there. Despite this gentleman's best efforts since last December, he cannot get permission for a key to that gate, yet his fish have to be in the lake early in May. I do not know who to turn to, but I am just asking for some information from the minister what would be the best way to resolve this problem.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Seeing as we have already passed the Fisheries line, is there leave of the committee to revert to some portion of Fisheries, so the honourable member can ask these questions? Leave? [agreed]

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Chairman, I think the best thing to do is—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Do you have the minister's mike on? He is not sitting at his seat, eh. He is sitting at Mr. Downey's seat.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, the best way to approach this probably is that we should get the details and review the situation. I know that very often remote

access roads are closed in order to maintain or keep a certain level of remoteness to an area if it is not to be readily accessed for hunting and some other activities that may have been opened up when a resource road was first put in, but I have no idea if that is the situation in this case.

**Mr. Jennissen:** I do not believe it is the situation. I think what is happening here is, and I am guessing a little bit, that the mine, which is no longer operational, is perhaps worried about liability, people using that road and perhaps getting hurt on mine property. However, some people do have a key to this gate, and there is one person in Flin Flon who has been designated by the former Granges Exploration Company. I think it is now called Vista Gold because the former company has been taken over or has amalgamated. Anyway, one person does have access to this key. He has given this key or similar keys to at least several cottagers and one trapper but not all cottagers have a key. This gentleman, who has the licence to put fish in the lake, cannot get access to the key no matter how he has begged and how he has phoned, and he is very frustrated because those fish are coming in early May.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

**Mr. Cummings:** Again, I am convinced that we will need to get further detail. It does sound like the member is describing what may be a correct situation. It might even be a lease involved in some respects, so if he could give us as much information as he can, and we will pursue it.

**Mr. Jennissen:** I will indeed do that, Mr. Minister. I just want to impress upon everyone though that there is a very tight time line here. That lake is open early May, those fish have to be in there early May, and this gentleman has been trying to reach the people responsible in Denver, Colorado, since December. They are not returning the phone call. They did not return my phone call this morning either. I finally did get a hold of him this afternoon, and it is sort of, well, wait till the manager comes back, which has been sort of the standard story since last December. So this gentleman with the fish is obviously somewhat irritated and would like a speedy resolution to this, but I will

provide the information to the minister, and I hope the minister will help us perhaps lean on the right people.

**Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake):** Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister would be so kind as to give this member leave to revert to Central Region and different departments that I may make some points with fishing and drainage, et cetera.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** Is there leave of the committee to revert? [agreed]

**Mr. Clif Evans:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister. I just want to touch on a few things, some of the issues in the Interlake region and the central region have been discussed with the previous ministers over the past seven years, but I would like to just discuss a few of the same issues with the now minister and ask, first of all, what his department has, if not decided yet, are they going to decide on whether they are going to go ahead with the Washow Bay system and onto the next phase for the Washow Bay area.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, this was obviously an old and ongoing concern about whether or not there is enough capital being prioritized to meet the needs of this project. There have been some discussions with the council in that area. There was an acquisition for 3.5 miles of terrain back in 1990-91 acquisition of right-of-way, and there have not been major capital allocated however. It is our hope that there may be some portions of it that we could provide some relief, but it has not been elevated to a high priority at this time.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I want to thank the minister for that. The Washow Bay area—and I could be wrong—but part of the Washow Bay system is south of the proposed and future development for peat moss, I believe. I would certainly hope that with the potential in the future ongoing discussions with the peat moss companies that hope to establish there, we could, if it ties in at all, assist with the drainage that is going to be needed and that hopefully the Washow Bay system will be able to provide a better opportunity.

I am certainly hoping that the department looks very favourably at going along with the next phase as possible and hopefully enhance that economic push for

the peat moss operation. Drainage as a whole—and I know drainage is a problem throughout many areas of Manitoba and with the water that we are having now—but over the past quite a few years the provincial drainage system within the Interlake area and within central region, we have had a lot of problems with it. There have been communities, people, councillors who have indicated that there has to be some ongoing maintenance work being done on our provincial drainage systems. There are a few drains right now that do need the work.

\* (1500)

One of the problems that I was faced with a few years back when questioning the previous minister was the fact that they wanted to establish a better system with the Netley Creek system. They had indicated to this member and to the House that they were going to begin work on the Netley Creek system from Lake Winnipeg. The Netley Creek drainage system would alleviate a tremendous amount of water in the R.M. of Armstrong through that whole system. Councillors and people are being told that a lot of work cannot be done in that area because Netley Creek cannot handle it. Then we are being told that Netley Creek was going to be enhanced and improved and that the work would start. I believe if I remember correctly, and the minister can correct me, that the work was supposed to have been started either the summer of '93 or the summer of '94.

Can the minister enlighten me on where that drainage system and the upgrading of that is?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, we do intend to do some work starting on the area closer to the lake, obviously, and work up. That project is going to consume a lot of money, but we have made a commitment to do some work this year.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I am pleased to hear that. I believe the minister can enlighten me that it was supposed to be approximately a \$2-million project, \$2-million to \$3-million project from start to finish, but having said that, whatever cost it is, I can assure the minister that that area that would drain into Netley Creek would save the communities and the people in that area a lot of money over the long run if that drain can be improved to the point where we can drain more water into that system.

I am glad to hear that it is going to start this summer or this spring. I think, seeing what we have seen in the last couple of years with the unfortunate moisture conditions we have had, there have been people who have suffered extremely. Even before the moisture content we have had in the last three years, the situation in that area is very, very bad, and it is very serious when there is any moisture whatsoever, so just to discuss it with the minister and to say I am pleased that we are going with that, and hopefully it will be quick enough. I hope it is past the stage already of planning and into the stage of construction, if you want to call it that.

**Mr. Cummings:** I am told that there will be work done this summer. It will not just be paperwork.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** On a topic of drainage or of flooding, Mr. Chairman, the last couple of years the department has had different areas as offices in targeted areas for flooding that people can communicate with. I asked the former minister why, understanding it in one way, but having seen what has occurred in the Interlake area around and between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg, why we might not be able to set up such a communications office and a flood assistance office, say, in the community of Ashern. I know that the other areas are going to be in dire straits, but so are we in that area, and I do not think it would be a problem to put one in there.

**Mr. Cummings:** I suppose there are opportunities to put in place more offices. We zeroed in largely on the main rivers. Is the member saying that there is difficulty in co-ordination or getting information? Perhaps that is something that we can review. We zeroed in on the areas where we thought the highest level of need would be.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I do not know how much of a difficulty it would create by not having such an office there. I believe after seeing for the last couple of years, and also with the Fairford dam area, and I understand there is work that has to be done on the Fairford dam this year, I hope, but I believe that in seeing what I have seen in the last two years that it is a major flood area, as are other portions of Manitoba. I think it would be a plus for the area to have such an office there so that they can co-ordinate the problems and deal with the

problems as they come. I am sure they are going to be coming pretty soon.

I realize the department and the people out there work pretty diligently as far as trying to keep up with the whole situation there on Lake Manitoba and the Fairford River and the Dauphin River and Lake Winnipeg, just as an extra mind-thought to have something like that in that area so that it will be more readily available.

**Mr. Cummings:** I will certainly take that under advisement. I would suggest that, tongue in cheek, we are trying to co-ordinate the solutions not the problems, but certainly we want to make sure that where possible we can be of assistance. That is chronically a high-water area in that part of the province, there is no question about that.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I have had many discussions over the past many years about the fishing situation. As the minister is well aware, he has had meetings with different fishing organizations, different fishing groups in different areas, organizations who have brought their issues to him and to the previous minister, and there is still a lot of concern, there is still a lot of uncertainty as to just exactly where the fishing industry is going. In some areas there do not seem to be problems, in other areas there are.

I know that certainly one of the messages I have heard from the fishermen is that cutting quotas is not the answer to the future of the fishermen. Some have told me that they are going to quit fishing altogether because they just cannot make a go of that. They do not believe that that is the answer, what the answer is. We have heard many times different requests about boundary changes, the issue on mesh size.

\* (1510)

Another issue that has been brought to my attention, and it was dealt with by the former minister, that fishermen are telling me that there is a fair amount of fish being sold throughout the whole area without going through the quota. The previous minister, I believe, and I only go by what I am being told, had promised fishermen that the department would upgrade its investigation units to be more forceful, I guess, in

checking on some of the alleged black market sale. He told the people from one area that that was going to be beefed up as far as checks. Now, I know that on the west side they have the black lab that is in place—I forget his name—but the fishing industry itself as a whole is concerned, and these are fishermen who do not want to see the fishing industry go down the drain, want to see it enhanced.

Has the minister's department done any study or anything to go along with what the previous minister said about that?

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, Mr. Chairman, there is an obvious long-term issue in the fisheries, not just in Lake Winnipeg but in Manitoba and Winnipegosis as well, Winnipegosis particularly, but one of the concerns that the member raises is quite legitimate about information and feedback from the people in the fishery.

I have held meetings since coming to this office, I believe with representatives of all of the areas, with those who are more or less formally recognized as representing their communities and various basins within the Lake Winnipeg fishery, and everybody has an opinion, that is for sure, and probably with a greater or lesser degree of correctness with them all, but, nevertheless, they are probably all valid in their own right. What we have to do is make sure that we ultimately bring some balance and a sustainable approach to the fishery.

The member indicates that there are people on the lake who are saying that they are not able to survive. I do not know whether he was meaning they are not able to survive because of the restrictions that we are putting on the fishery or because they acknowledge that there is a problem with the fishery. There are two schools of thought that come through the door on that very item. There are those who say I am a good fisherman; I can catch my limit; leave me alone. There are others who say he is catching his limit; he is not leaving enough for me; you have to cut him back, and it is the guy from the south basin who is coming up and taking all the fish out of the north basin, and it is the guy in the narrows who cannot get access to what he sees in one of the other basins and so on. I am speaking in generic terms, but the member is well aware that those are the types of issues that have been raised.

I want to go on record that we will very soon have to put to rest all of the concerns that have been raised and make announcements about what will occur for fishing opportunity this summer, but in that context, I did say to the various groups that came through the door that I was willing to look at different ways of managing quotas, that when you reduce a quota too often what has happened is that is seen as taking away an opportunity from someone permanently.

Now, if you buy the quota, of course, then you are, but there may be other ways of looking at the quotas as well, where a reduction does not mean that that particular quota allocation is gone forever. We see that all the time in agricultural production. I do not know why it would not apply with some possibility in this area of endeavour as well, but there is the question of boundaries around the communities. I do not think it hurts to put on the record that I suppose it is fair to say they were put there in the first place to protect the communities, and now they would like them expanded but with the same protection. That is not unanimous, but those are some of the views that are out there. There is also an opportunity to look at other ways of improving the hatchery. Maybe it is the farmer in me, but I wonder about better control on the starting of the seasons to protect the spawners. I do not think there is an argument that can assail that type of thinking, so I guess I am flagging for the member opposite that in a general sense that is how I look at this issue.

We have to look at habitat, as well. We do have to look at the total fishing pressure, but, in fact, there are a lot of people out there who are not fishing now. He is right. There are some, however, who transfer their quotas to others who then end up filling them, and it creates a situation where there are people who no doubt would like to be bought out, to be frank about it.

We have, in fact, contacted federal authorities to see if they might be willing to provide some relief in that respect in terms of economic development, using that as some leverage to provide alternative sources of income for some of the areas, but I think the member opposite on that line would have to agree that there are some of these communities which are relatively remote. What are their alternatives for economic activity? Fishing, lumber, some hunting and other traditional areas of



endeavour. They do not have a high level of alternatives, but there may be some things that can be developed.

There is a variety of theories on mesh size. I, personally, coming from having constituents along Lake Manitoba, believe we need to keep the perch down which probably means that there is in that lake—and I guess it is less relevant for Lake Winnipeg—good reason to look at various mesh sizes, but that creates a battle in its own right.

The real fundamental problem we have is the habitat being impacted, and, No. 2, the valuable species are—there is quite a range between the value of the species, and the valuable species are the ones that are being pressured, the pickerel and sauger. If you try to protect them and cut back people's opportunity to catch them, of course they are very angry unless you have a plan.

So that speaks to where I hope we will be able to take the fishery in a number of areas, and that is to have a broad agreement on a sustainable development plan for the lake among the users of the lake. Now, that in the first instance means the commercial fishery in the context of which this question was raised, but there are lots of other interests that also want to have a say about the future of the lake.

In terms of enforcement, I did give my commitment that if enforcement was as lax as some of them were claiming, that we probably could deal with that. Others within the fishery will tell me that there is not an enforcement problem, that there is not as big a black market as is occasionally suggested. I will have to reserve judgment on that because we will only know otherwise if we are able to prove what is going into the, quote, black market, or the direct sales.

But remember, we are probably in tough over the long haul because of competition from the Great Lakes, and right now, I am told, the competition, would you believe, from Alaska is enormous and is driving down the price of the fish that would compete for the market that our pickerel are being produced for. So that was my general thought on the problems we are going to have to deal with in the fishery.

On the enforcement side, the member did mention that we had a dog available now. We also have spot checks and road blocks that are used from time to time to determine if there is very much fish moving that is not going under the auspices of the Freshwater Fish or being properly permitted. I know that people are saying it does not really pay anymore to run your own fish shed given the prices. The member may have another view.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the minister's comments. I guess I would also say to him that with the commercial fishing industry being so dominant in my area I would like to see something done and some sort of co-operation, co-ordination, to be able to maintain the commercial fishing industry. I understand that the competition and the prices are also creating a lot of problems for our commercial fishermen in our areas, but one of the other suggestions is a comprehensive plan, review, to have fish hatcheries implemented.

\* (1520)

I hear this all the time from my different area fishermen. They are telling me that they would know the spots that a hatchery could benefit. They are looking at that. They are talking to me about it, and I am sure they are talking to the minister's department about it. Does the department have some plans to establish a system of hatcheries, if you want to call it that?

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes, there has been an ongoing program of mobile hatcheries. We have, I suppose, as aggressive a plan as there was, but we certainly got encouragement from the fishermen that I met with in all three lakes, and there are varying levels of success around that. I think the hatchery program needs to be enhanced with some work done on some of the tributary streams. That, I think, needs further clarification however. Everybody has their own theory about where the fish will spawn the best and why they are not spawning as well as they might be right now.

That is why I tend to go back to the question about how long we give the spawners before we open up the fishery in the spring, and I know that is not as simple as it sounds because it can impact on the fishery, but I

suggest that is a pretty good way of approaching it because how can you assail the fact that we want you to leave the spawners for a little while except by being told that the fish may be quite difficult to catch if you do not get some of them at least while they are spawning or still carrying spawn, but we do run a number of programs, and we need co-operation, not that we have not been getting it, but we need to co-opt various organizations to help with the running of fish spawning sites.

The Lake Manitoba fishery which is, again, separate, it would appear has had a very successful spawning program and would like to enlarge it. I think on Lake Winnipeg we can do more of the same, but we are still looking for the assistance from the various communities, not only the sport community but the commercial community to help us with the spawning, and the mobile spawning is one aspect of it. Certainly, you have a higher level of success if you can keep the fingerlings a little longer before they are allowed to be released, but I am told by those who have been working in this area that we have learned a lot over the last few years about how to maybe increase the survivability in the big lakes.

I am only repeating, frankly, what I learned through the discussions with these various groups, but it seems to make sense. In fact, that is the direction I believe the department wants to move in terms of enhancing the spawning opportunities, but we need to do some more work identifying where some of the good spawning areas are and whether or not they have been impacted by, for that matter, the hydroelectric development. I think people will still blame that as causing the demise of the fishery.

There are probably a multiple of reasons, and the best that we can expect is to mitigate some of those impacts more than we have done in the past—rivers right in the member's backyard that are no longer as good for spawning as they used to be. The last department I came from, people would be very anxious to blame agricultural interference as the reason why the fish spawning grounds have deteriorated, but I think the member would, and I hope if he agrees he will stand up and acknowledge this, that unfortunately one of the things we have to deal with is the beaver influence on

these rivers. It is in fact probably doing more to destroy the spawning grounds than almost anything else.

In fact, the quote, environmental disaster, unquote that some people brought to my attention a couple of years ago, where there was literally putrid water found oozing out of, I believe, the Fisher River or one of the rivers in that area was seen to have been primarily the result of beavers damming up that part of the river, and the water simply was not moving. It became stagnant and simply had no oxygen in it, and all those other things that occur. So I guess the issues that we discussed in Environment the last couple of years, some of them such as this are demonstrating that they are cross-sectoral in the responsibility and we will have to continue to deal with them in that respect. I personally—and I want this to be on the record actually—believe there are areas where we probably should have a very aggressive beaver control program because of the other impacts that flow from it.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I agree with the minister on that. I would hope that his department is looking at the constituency of Interlake, because it seems as far as the beaver problem, the farmers and the fishermen do complain a fair amount about the beaver problem in that area. It is causing us problems, not only for the producers but for the fishermen. Also, just to put on record, as far as the hatcheries go, I know there was a problem in the past, and I am hoping that the department and the minister seriously look at working with the Dauphin River community that had a hatchery there at one time. It was providing jobs and it was providing the fingerlings.

I know in discussions with the chief and council and people around there, they have indicated that they would really seriously want to look at establishing a hatchery again at the Dauphin River community and would want to work with the minister and his department to establish such a hatchery, re-establish it I guess and basically deal with it and forget about what had occurred in the past. I believe that was some over 10 years ago. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) would probably remember that issue. So I am putting that on record, and hopefully the minister, if and when approached, now will encourage the communities to approach the department with that, and hopefully they will want to deal with it.

I want to finish up with a question on Hecla Island. How far is the review study or proposal, how far is it along to have the cottage developments established on Hecla Island?

**Mr. Cummings:** I would like to respond, first of all, to a question that was asked previously about Dauphin River.

We are, in fact, talking to the people in Dauphin River to establish a fishery enhancement spawning program there, and I should put on the record, we do have three spawning collection areas—spawning and release, I guess, would be the way to describe it—at the Whiteshell, Grand Rapids and Swan Creek that we are operating. Last year, we released about a hundred million walleye fry, 800,000 trout, 40 million whitefish fry and about 3,500 sturgeon fingerlings as a result of—and I am sure the member realizes those numbers are all probably plus or minus 10 percent. You do not count them one by one as they are going out the gate.

\* (1530)

The current question the member is asking is about what stage is there in terms of discussions around Hecla Island? Would he like to expand on that question a little bit, please?

**Mr. Clif Evans:** Yes, my question was is there a review or is there a study being done? Has it been completed? Is it going ahead, if it has been completed, for a cottage development on the island, and if so, what stage is this proposal at, and where are we going with this?

**Mr. Cummings:** There are a number of studies and information-gathering processes that are going on of which I would assume the member is probably reasonably well aware because they are not clandestine at all. There is pressure from former islanders, if anything was ever to happen, wanting to be given an opportunity to return to what was their ancestral home.

There are a number of other people from all walks of life who have raised the question about whether or not there should be a review, and we, in fact, are reviewing the area to see what the concerns and the issues might be. But, as you can guess, Hecla Island, I think the

member would agree, the park there and the infrastructure dollars that have been put in there over the last few years, we have done a great deal to try and encourage the economic activity, and, in fact, the viability of the Hecla Island resort.

The golf course, of course, is a good attraction. The resort is well known and very capable, but it still needs to attract people in numbers probably beyond what it does today, so that is also part of the formula.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** So the minister is saying that they are looking at a proposal for cottage development, that there is really no specific plan already in place to go ahead with selling any portions of the land to anybody, of course without dealing with former residents and ancestors. So there is no real proposal or plan developed for the establishment of cottage sites and community on Hecla Island to date.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, I am not trying to be coy with the member. I have indicated we are looking at what opportunities or possibilities there are. We are not looking at re-establishing the old village or anything of that nature, but there certainly has been some desire to look at what might be available in Crown lands and that sort of area on the north shore, but no decisions have been made, and we certainly will be continuing to look at that, and I will make sure that there is an open process if anything, in fact, is discussed further.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** I thank the minister. I am done with questioning, but if there was or if there has been, that I might not have as yet, because usually when I was Natural Resources critic, I would get a lot of the information with respect to anything being done within a department, but I would appreciate if there was anything in the last little while up to date with respect to Hecla Island and with respect to a future development that the minister could provide this member with that information.

I would appreciate it and I know that it would be a lot easier for myself as the representative for the area to be up to date and up to snuff with what is going on for Hecla. I have had a lot of people come to me on the street in Riverton asking me, so I am taking the opportunity to ask the minister and would appreciate anything that there might be with respect to the island.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, I am hoping that perhaps the member might even go a little further and indicate whether or not he would want to encourage me to look at some opportunities for leasing on the island, on some of the Crown properties. Let us face it, this was a crucible upon which several people politically and numerous families locally had their futures rise and fall. Even the fact that we were discussing whether or not there should be a review of that and potentially looking at some opportunity for leasing of lots, even that will create a lot of interest obviously.

I want to say, too, and given that there was a question raised about an hour or two ago, I want to take the opportunity to indicate that while my deputy is a former Hecla Islander, he has already declared his conflict of interest in this area and the ADM will be acting on any issues that are raised around Hecla Island. This is a far bigger issue than you or me or Mr. Tomasson's family for that matter. It is an issue of population of that area or nonpopulated, and, frankly, I suspect, whether he wants to put it on the record or not, that the member would want something to occur in that area, given the economic activity and the repopulation of the area that might be quite beneficial to his constituency. Obviously, he is asking the questions, so if he chooses not to rise on that, I guess that will be his prerogative.

**Mr. Clif Evans:** No, I am not afraid to put anything on the record. I did ask the minister, of course, is there something—I mean, I am not going to yes or no anything until I see what is on paper, am I? Of course, I encourage any economic development for my constituency, and I have had the opportunity, I have got the file—the Hecla Island file that is probably a foot thick, and I have read through it and I know all about the situation. But as far as the development goes or the future development, I mean, I am being asked to make comments from my constituents as to what I know about it and I am asking the minister. So to make any comment whether I yea or nay it, I would like to see it first and then deal with the minister after that. No, I am not afraid to put anything on the record. You show me and discuss it with me and the community, and I will certainly provide you with an answer after that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity and Mr. Minister for the opportunity to bring some issues to you to light. Thank you.

\* (1540)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Good day, Mr. Chairperson. I do appreciate the opportunity to ask just a few questions. I understand that we are—

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** Order, please. I do not know if your mike is on, the member for Inkster.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** A little red light is on.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** Okay.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I imagine that means—thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for your concern.

My question to the minister is: Over the last number of years, in the department's opinion, have we seen our fish populations, if you like, being depleted overall through the province of Manitoba? Is there reason for us to believe otherwise, that the number of fish is actually on the increase?—if you can just give some sort of an idea.

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes, I would not claim to be an expert in responding to this, but I have had, as I said a few moments ago, a lot of discussions with the department and with various interests, particularly around Lake Winnipeg, but I also have the west side of Lake Manitoba as my constituency. So I have had some ongoing interest in the issue, and it is quite legitimate to ask when the only headlines you see from time to time is where there are difficulties.

We do have a lot of lakes that are increasing and they are in very good shape. A number of them may be catch-and-release sport lakes. I think we believe that we have seen some increases right here in the downtown area; actually there is becoming a little bit of increase in fishing activity. But Lake Winnipeg has seen some declines in the production. Whether that means that the lake is in trouble—you can only use the statistical information in whatever way you deem appropriate when you look at it. I can share the numbers.

In 1988, for example, in Lake Winnipeg, pickerel and sauger would have been in excess of two million

pounds, millions of kgs., pardon me, which would be four million pounds, roughly, and now, last year, we saw the production slightly over one million. So it roughly dropped in half in eight years. On the other hand, there were years—in 1994, there was quite an increase in sauger, and they went back up; sauger alone went back up to a million and a half, exceeded the pickerel that year. So I am told you can graph this, you can follow the production, but there are a whole lot of things that go with it.

The commercial production of fish is partly driven as well by price. There are a lot of whitefish, I am told, in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg but they are not worth a lot. I believe the figure is something like a spread between 60 cents a pound to \$2 a pound for pickerel. I stand to be corrected on the figures, but that is the type of spread we are talking about. So fishermen are saying it is hardly worth their time to go after the whitefish. The second part of that is they are not easy to market right now, apparently. That is what is driving the price down even though they are a very desirable fish in the minds of a lot of people, but there is competition out there that is filling that market.

Lake Manitoba, actually I can show from '82 to '95, and the figures the department has produced is that the annual production of fish has gone up. That is different than what we just described for Lake Winnipeg. It is hard to answer the question generically without talking about a specific lake.

We know Lake Winnipegosis is in bad shape in terms of what it is producing. The pickerel are virtually nonexistent. On the other hand, I was berated by a number of the fishermen for not allowing more perch to be taken, and there are those who argue that the perch are predatory and taking the fingerlings anyway, so we should reduce them when we are trying to increase the pickerel. They were down to catching suckers this spring and it turned out there was actually a bit of a market for them. So they are having a bad time, and we are challenging them to produce a sustainable development strategy for their whole lake.

In the broadest sense, the sport fishery has been reasonable in almost all areas. Lake of the Prairies however has been down, and I do not have any scientific information in front of me, but I was told by

a resident of that area this week that they think it may be beginning to recover, looking at the age of some of the fish that are now in that area.

Lake Winnipegosis, I guess I will just repeat what I said before, that the '96 summer season was extremely low. They only produced 24,000 kgs in each year and a rehabilitated lake could produce upwards of half a million kgs of walleye if it was producing as we think it should.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The reason why I ask, in most part, is because I can recall a discussion I had with some fishermen—it might have been a few years back—and their concern was with respect to the size of mesh on nets and the impact that was going to have on the fish stock. Even though we do not have one of the oceans on either side of our borders—with the Port of Churchill, of course, being an exception in terms of we do have direct access to our oceans.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The concern is at least, in most part, that we do have some sort of fish management, that this resource is going to be around. With the numbers that the minister was referring to with respect to Lake Winnipeg, it is hard for someone such as myself to gauge whether it is good or bad when you say 2 million kgs in one given year. But if you say the previous year it was 1 million, is that a good or is that a bad thing? I really could not tell. Nor am I naive to believe that you can give an accurate projection of how many fish are in any given lake. What is important is that—and I would look to the minister to see if in fact the department actually has something of this nature and that is graphs of sorts that give indication—and Lake Winnipeg is probably the most—is quite often the one that is referred to because of its size. It does play a significant role in the overall economy in the province of Manitoba just by the amount of commercial fishing that actually takes place.

Does the minister have access to some sort of graphs that indicate fishing for the last, let us say, in the last decade? What I am looking for more so is towards trends. Is the province of Manitoba, do we have reason to believe that we should not become overly concerned about the amount of fish that is being pulled out of our lakes? That is the commercial side of it.

The other aspect, of course, is more of the leisure, the family that decides to go out. On that point, I have always been surprised with just the number of people, particularly the number of constituents, that come to talk to me. They are very avid fishermen. They derive a lot of enjoyment, justifiably so. I am wondering if the minister can just indicate in terms of some of these, what he anticipates for costs, because there have been increases in licensing fees if you wanted to fish. Does the department have any sort of multiyear budgeting for annual increments in the costs of licences? I would look for some sort of a comment with respect to that.

\* (1550)

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, yes, we could share graphs. There are lots of them available in terms of following what the production has been off of various lakes. I can believe, and I have been told, that the fishery is always cyclical. So you can have a three-year graph that shows that things are dropping through the floor, but if you do not know or if you do not balance that against what is the known availability of a year-class that may be becoming mature the next year, you can be surprised by a spike where it will come back up again. That has been known to happen as well. So I guess I like to think that a decade-long display of what has been harvested is useful.

Fishermen will argue, well, then, you need to balance that against what the year has been like. Particularly in a winter fishery, they will tell you this winter that they had a rough time getting out there enough. Now others who had lots of equipment and were in the right place did very well. So there is a limitation to only looking at graphing of what could happen in terms of predicting the availability for the coming year.

On that note, however, the department does test netting before seasons begin. Very often, I guess right now, we use the test netting to determine the stage of spawning, but the opportunity to check whether the fish are running and the condition of the fish, we do that as well as, of course, checking what is actually being brought in.

The biologists within the department are advising that they have some concern about the trends on Lake Winnipeg right now, but there are always long-term

trends that rise and fall in any fishery. It is something that we are going to have to watch carefully. My predecessor took some steps to protect the pickerel harvest, to reduce the pressure on pickerel, and we believe that we need to make sure that the pickerel numbers come back and, ultimately, the production comes up.

You mentioned economic activity. There is \$14-million worth of activity that comes off of the commercial fishery. That is just Lake Winnipeg, I believe. So you can see that it is a significant impact, particularly when a number of those areas that receive income from it are smaller and remote communities. It is a very complex industry in as much as the remote fish stations where they deliver to have to get enough volume and have to have enough capability of operation to maintain the quality of the fish, at the same time the marketing board has to be able to market at an appropriate price.

We have come through a period of time when the price on pickerel and the final payments on pickerel and sauger, for that matter, were very high; I believe a record high a couple or three years ago. The prediction is that we may not be able to sustain that, so the fact is the pressure on the pickerel fishery might go down because of economic factors. That is not good news. I am not standing here to say that may happen for sure, but that is the other type of influencing factor that the fishermen continually point out to me in the series of meetings that I had, and that is, that people have other things to do or need to do other things. In fact, if they are not catching fish when they are out on the lake—and they may stay there for three weeks or six weeks depending on how their catch is going.

I am talking more in the summer season than I am in the winter, but those kinds of things also influence the production. I am terribly conscious of the well-known problems that have occurred on the East Coast and the West Coast and various other areas, but interestingly enough, in the name of sustainable development and whether or not man can untangle and unwind some of the problems that he has created over the years, I think there is no better example than the fact that we are starting to receive marketing pressure because of the production going up in the Great Lakes. There has been some serious cleanups and improvements

undertaken in the Great Lakes and their production of fish is now coming back, possibly to the detriment of our market.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chairperson, I was also wanting the minister to comment with respect to fishing licences. Does the department have any intention on annual incremental increases, in particular for the leisure fisherman that just wants to be able to have a family day out or get together with some friends and go out and do some fishing?

**Mr. Cummings:** I am not sure if the member is concerned about the cost of the licence or whether we have a long-range plan to increase licences in order to enhance revenue. If he is thinking about revenue, I do not mind addressing that as well. The only increase that occurred in the recreational licences this year was the rounding up in order to cover off the GST. Instead of it being \$5.43 or some odd number like that, we rounded them up to the next highest dollar and made it 6 bucks or 7 bucks or 15 bucks. We are not apologizing for the fact that we rounded it up, but it really only created about, I believe, \$20,000 worth of income, if I am not mistaken. [interjection] Twenty-one.

The fact is the other increase was—and there is no use beating around it, we did for the first time impose a licence fee on seniors. It is a reduced fee—\$6. I do not think it is an arduous responsibility to impose on the seniors. This makes it much easier to send information to them. It may, in fact, encourage them to fish more once they are on the mailing list for other information that can be provided to them.

Combined with that, of course, was the Fisheries Enhancement stamp that my predecessor introduced three or more years ago, and those monies have been used for significant projects for fishery enhancement. While we are talking about revenue, I do have to point out that the nonresident sporting licence has increased, including the full rounding. We got an increase of \$100,000 from that as well, so those would be the major dollars. Remember that we also increased the commission to the licence retailers, the vendors, that becomes a negative figure because that has to be reduced from the total dollars worth of income that comes from licensing.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chairperson, I would be interested in knowing the rationale that was used with respect to having the reduced rate now for seniors.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, seniors licences were free. Cross-jurisdictional comparisons showed that not all but almost all jurisdictions do charge seniors a fee of some level. I believe the \$6 fee puts us in at the low end of the schedule where a fee is charged at all. As I said, it certainly is not intended to be punitive at \$6, but it does also make sure that we can include the seniors, some of whom are very active, the majority of whom are quite active when they want to go recreational fishing. I think the opportunity for them to be involved with information and knowledge and all of the other things, interaction that occurs with that licensing program, that this is a useful approach.

They do have a conservation limit. A regular fee would be \$16, so it is a little more than a third. Fifteen, sorry. The regular would be \$15, Mr. Chairman.

\* (1600)

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chairperson, the temptation is great in terms of to continue the discussion with respect to the fee, but I will resist that and rather go into the small lakes and rivers.

Manitoba has thousands of bodies of water that contain a lot of fish. I had a constituent who had visited me at a local restaurant and had expressed concern about lakes that do not necessarily have, that you do not have access via roads, that you actually have to fly in. I was interested in the restrictions, in particular, for individuals to set up camps around there or the potential of even cottages. Have we seen more cottages being built in those areas where they are being flown in? Is the government seeing an increase in sports fishermen lodges being established in Manitoba? I am also interested in knowing to what degree we have had more, in particular, Americans, coming in to fish in our waters. That is not to say it is negative or positive, just out of curiosity.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, I am told there is a very high demand of people wanting to establish permanent residences on lakeshore property—cottages, pardon me. There is more demand than what we have

allowed, I suppose, is the correct terminology, but this does not restrict all other access to the lakes. Certainly people are welcome to fish and whatever else they wish to do in terms of an outdoor experience in these fly-in areas.

I am not sure what concern the member is expressing, whether he is expressing the concern that there should be more cottaging permitted on some of these lakes or whether it is just a matter of access. Certainly access is not restricted, but remember this is the age-old debate about—there are those with a very strong environmental view of our resources who say that permanent access and permanent residences should be restricted. Then, however, that can lead to a bit of an environmental elitism, as a matter of fact, because then only those who can afford to fly in or who have three weeks to paddle in and out again can have access to the area. So in my own view—and after having watched, frankly, I believe it was David Suzuki recently, complaining about access roads into the remote areas in terms of resource extraction. Access roads for any purpose lead to some concerns in that area. I personally believe that we should have more access, but we do not at this point.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I am wondering if the department has any sort of a mechanism that allows for some sort of public input, other than just the minister who happens to be an MLA who consults no doubt with his constituents. Is there some sort of a forum that allows for people to have direct input on how we are developing some of these more remote lakes? The establishment of cottages, I know that there has been an increase in demand. I know this particular individual that brought it to my attention was greatly concerned that the government seemed to be authorizing any sort of request that was being put before it. So does the department have any mechanism that allows for some sort of an overall plan on the development of some of our lakes, in particular in northern Manitoba?

**Mr. Cummings:** The short answer is yes, there is a policy in place and the various lakes are identified. The policy is developed by a public process so that there is input from the general public. If a classification were to be required to be changed, or if there was a request to change it, I am sure that it would take the same type of public process to change it.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Finally, it is kind of, some might say, somewhat of a different question. I had heard that the province, and I found it a little bit difficult to believe, that there was some looking into lobster farms. Is the minister aware of maybe a lobster hatchery or a lobster farm, I was told, somewhere in the Elie area? I look to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) who I know keeps his thumb on so many things—

**An Honourable Member:** Red ones with the claws?

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The big red—yes, with the claws. If, in fact, there was something. The reason why I asked is because I know in a government document, whether it was maybe an application through Grow Bonds or REDI, that there was something to do with lobster, and I am asking if the minister is in fact aware of it at all.

**Mr. Cummings:** The lobster, I am not aware of. There are certainly a number of people who are looking to establish—

**An Honourable Member:** Crayfish.

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes—the opportunity for fish farming. There are in fact huge opportunities available. That may well become very competitive with our existing fisheries, because the capability of producing fish under a farming format, if you will, a fish farm format—and I am extrapolating a little bit from the idea of whether or not somebody might be in fact breeding lobsters in this area. It has not come to anybody's attention at this table. The opportunity for losses are very great, but the opportunity for profit is enormous, I am told, in fish farming, given the world's demand for fish today. It is going up and not down, and it is a very efficient conversion of foodstuffs as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the item pass?

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** I thank the minister for allowing some of my colleagues to revert back to other parts of our Estimates that we have already covered, and I am very pleased to understand that he is always ready to please the opposition.

I believe we are on the Wildlife section under Administration.



**Mr. Chairperson:** That is correct.

**Mr. Struthers:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the minister a few questions about the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk which I need to get a little bit of guidance on from the minister. My understanding is that it is a federal accord that several of the provincial jurisdictions have signed on to, and it is supposed to provide the immediate protection for endangered or threatened species, provide the protection for their habitat and recovery plans for animals that are listed as at risk.

Could the minister tell me if the minister has formally signed on to the this national accord?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether this type of issue follows me around or not, but I used to always argue that harmonization of environmental process was one of the most important things that could happen to encourage and provide a new way of demonstrating that this country was a viable working entity, that we did not have jurisdictional blind spots or that we could have interjurisdictional co-operation.

\* (1610)

My predecessor believed, does believe, in very much the same approach because the accord that the member is referring to, I believe, is the one which was signed in Charlottetown and was not the Charlottetown accord, believe me, because this thing—after all of the Natural Resource, Wildlife ministers signed on to what they thought was an appropriate approach to a federal bill that recognized provincial jurisdiction and encouraged provincial co-operation, for some reason unknown to most of us or to any particular brand of logic, this did not translate into a working bill in Ottawa that reflected the principles which the ministers agreed to in Charlottetown.

I represented Minister Driedger at the Environment ministers' meeting where we implored Mr. Marchi who was responsible for both areas, both environment and wildlife and natural resources, to reconsider what he was doing with this bill. We asked that there be another meeting at a ministerial level. We asked that they consider the gravity of what they were doing

because, frankly, I was rather flattered at one stage when Sheila Copps was the minister and said that Manitoba's bill was the model upon which Ottawa should be building their endangered species act, and if they followed that act that was introduced by my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) when he was in this portfolio, a model being considered a model for all of Canada, the act that is—[interjection]He missed it.

The fact is that is not what we see in this bill. We see this as another contradiction in the national view of Canada that Ottawa politicians seem to have today which is that all good things come from Ottawa on high and the rest of us should comply. The fact is the bill, in my view and in the view of a number of other people, when it comes to the protection of endangered species is that it may create a shoot, shovel and shut-up mentality, frankly, that people who should be co-operating and who would want to under normal circumstances co-operate and support the protection of endangered species may view this bill as being so intrusive that they will not tell anybody when they find some endangered species on their land. Then it becomes the terrible three, shoot, shovel and shut up, and that leads to situations where you really do end up having species eradicated because people are afraid of what will happen. We do not want that to happen. We may have made some headway in talking to other jurisdictions.

I believe on the part of many people there is a lot of good intention that went into this bill, but I submit that there are some people who are overzealous in their support of it and say that the rest of us are seeing shadows behind every rock. It can encourage compliance virtually with American law is one view that has been expressed. Others say that is not right. I do not have a high comfort level. In fact, I am concerned about it. There is an element in this, the same as the gun registration frankly, and that is that there seems to be an inability to provide a high level of satisfaction that it will not lead to the type of interference that those who are the critics of it are opposed to. This is a bit like motherhood, however.

I mean, our bill in Manitoba, the bill we referenced earlier, Manitoba's legislation, the minister of the day had a lot of discussions with groups who were

concerned about where this legislation would lead. He was able to answer those concerns because the bill is seen to have some opportunities in it that are not just punitive. There are opportunities in this to really do something to protect and enhance, and a reasonable process for identification, frankly.

That does not seem to be available in this Endangered Species Act that Ottawa has introduced, and it leads also to the concern in the agricultural community, which a large number of us in this House represent, and I think we have good reason to be concerned. The example, I think, of the problems and what may have come off the rail in introducing this bill is that the government is trying to show how strong it is in protection in this area without really considering what might be the interpretation of some of the thrust that they are including in the bill, and particularly when you understand that at the hearing process someone talks about the fact he has several thousand acres of land under his protection and management in his ranch, and he said he could easily have no idea whether he has an endangered species on part of his ranch, but he was worried about losing control of it if that did happen.

One of the committee members, in an unguarded moment later on asked him, well, if you have all those cows out and all that land—words to this effect—do you have to bring them in every day to milk them? I mean, even my city colleagues in this House, I think in Manitoba at least, would recognize that this was not an informed view of the concerns that the rancher might have had. So I say that with respect, because I understand how remote urban communities can become from what we do day to day on the land, but what we need to have is a bill that reflects the reality of protecting the species and works with those who are private landowners.

Crown lands are another matter. Some of them are leased; some of them are strictly for Crown and public use, and we can deal with them as well. But the jurisdiction in this area was returned to the provinces 50 years ago, I guess, now, and should not be interfered with in the way that we believe this bill might, so we have encouraged the minister not to pass the bill. It went through committee with some amendments that we had encouraged, but we are not sure that they answer the questions either. So there is a hope that

perhaps the minister of the day has decided not to press this forward as aggressively as he once was, and we believe that that would be positive because we want to work with them.

I do not particularly want to be on record as being unalterably opposed to the protection of endangered species. I simply want some legislation that allows us to exercise our responsibilities. We are the closest to the ground, frankly, and should be able to provide the enforcement and the management as it was foreseen decades ago.

**Mr. Struthers:** If I understand the minister correctly, he is saying that his government agrees with the concept that was originally embarked upon by this group, by the intent of the accord, but he is worried about how it is going to play out in legislation here in the province.

Can the minister explain to me then what his government is going to do to maybe improve the accord, so that it does not have a harmful effect on the wildlife endangered species at risk here in the province? I also want to know, just mechanically, where does this leave us? If there are six jurisdictions already signed on, how can the minister go now—what is the process in getting the whole accord changed when already six jurisdictions have signed onto this national accord?

\* (1620)

**Mr. Cummings:** I believe that one of us is probably talking about something a little bit different here. The accord itself is no longer the issue. What was in the accord, I believe all jurisdictions, frankly, were prepared to sign on stating that these were the principles that they wanted incorporated and some of the specifics around it.

The point is that we are one of four provincial jurisdictions that already has an act, and I believe every jurisdiction except B.C. had said that they were prepared to implement legislation. B.C. said that it was not that they were opposed to implementing legislation, they believe they already have legislation in place, although they do not call it an endangered species act. So, it is a case of where there is almost unanimity

across the country among the provinces as to how they will handle this.

In the first place, most jurisdictions did not think there needed to be a federal act. I suppose that is a true statement, but if the federal authorities saw that they had some leadership role in this area, then they should try to practise it with a more realistic view of federal-provincial responsibilities. The act that is introduced is not consistent with the accord that was signed. I worked with colleagues in other jurisdictions since coming into this office, and they are unanimous in asking the federal authorities to rethink what they are doing in this area.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Perhaps I will review this thought for a moment, because the act was understood to apply to a wildlife species under provincial jurisdiction only if the species is found on federal land. So what that does is that this would create some significant concern to allow the act to apply to an animal that is within provincial or territorial jurisdiction without the agreement of that jurisdiction. There are a number of examples where we have a herd of caribou, for example, woodland caribou, who travel a number of areas. We are probably quite confident that we are able to protect them, that they will not be endangered, but they might be in the eyes of somebody else in another part of the country, and all of a sudden we have got ourselves a jurisdictional wrangle that was unanticipated. So it really does not need to be this complicated, and we would just like the federal authorities to reconsider the thrust of the act.

**Mr. Struthers:** I think maybe we can pass that line.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed):** Item 3. Resource Programs (f) Wildlife (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$283,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$252,900—pass; (c) Grant Assistance \$7,000—pass.

Item 3.(f) Wildlife (2) Big Game and Fur Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

**Mr. Struthers:** In this line of the Estimates, I would like to get into a bit of a discussion around a proposal

that this government has to open up the southern part of our province to big game hunting by U.S. and other foreign hunters. I understand that the government has sponsored several public meetings in the southern part of our province and has collected some information and has collected some opinions and has heard quite a number of proposals and concerns brought to them by hunters and other stakeholders in the southern part of our province. I also understand that several groups have pressed upon the minister concerns that they have with this proposal in southern Manitoba including groups like the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. It takes in not just the southern part of our province but into the Interlake as well.

There are many people who are concerned with this proposal, and I would like the minister to begin the discussion on this by explaining the process involved so far in gathering information and what the stakeholders involved have told him to this point and to indicate when we can look forward to some decisions in this area being made.

**Mr. Cummings:** It is interesting. By and large, the public likes consultation and process and wants to feel that they have input. A problem generally arises when any results of consultation and input do not agree with their view of the right answer of course. That becomes then the political responsibility to make sure that the process has been adequate in order to defend any potential decisions that might be made. But this was and is a consultation process as a result of concerns and interests being brought forward to press for an opportunity for out-of-country hunters in southern Manitoba and also driven by a number of issues. One is economic spin-offs, one is the view that there is a good herd of whitetails, particularly in southern Manitoba. Zone E does take in the whole south of Manitoba.

I guess I have expressed my frustration a little bit in this pretty big area, but then I realize that within that area there is a number of game-hunting areas, so it can be broken down. Zone E was last reviewed back in 1972, I am told. So I think it has been a useful exercise to raise the issue and to discuss it. Of course, the very time that we are discussing it, we have had a couple of years when the deer have been heavily impacted. We have done some feeding and other things to mitigate

against that, but it should not be any surprise, given the mood of some of the meetings, that most people who came out to the meetings were objectors. Probably those who were supporting may not have even come out to all that great an extent.

I can say with all honesty that there were people whom I know quite well who have far too many deer on their land who went to the meetings believing that this was a good thing and left deciding that they did not want it. I guess that is a sign of a good citizen who is prepared to have an open mind on a topic and not go with a blind made-up position, but we do have too many deer in some parts of southern Manitoba. The problem is that increasing the hunting probably will not even get at most of those considering where they are located. That is a broad statement. It may not be entirely borne out by the facts, but people raised the concern about private land being tied up for hunting. I think it is fair to say that there are a huge number of hunters come out of Winnipeg who see the present situation as a good one, and they want to keep it the way it is. So be it, I do not have a big problem with that, but it was an exercise that I think there should be.

\* (1630)

We have had a lot of discussion with the member for Dauphin and others about revenues that Natural Resources brings in, and I hope there is a willingness on the part of all parties to discuss the real economic spin-offs because we spend millions of dollars enhancing habitat, enhancing hunting opportunities, fishing opportunities, game ranching, logging, lumber versus chips, recreational camping, cottaging, all those things. They are all a part of the mix, whether or not we adequately gain the type of spin-offs that are beneficial to the society, produce the type of revenue that assists with the dollars that we need to spend to support the lifestyle and expenses of running our communities.

There are some parts of southern Manitoba who think they are being severely cheated by not having the opportunity to bring in—particularly American—but out-of-country hunters, and the concern would be of course that all they are looking for is trophy bucks. There are those who live here who say, well, they do not want them all gone, that they want their share of them to stay

here in Manitoba and are we giving away the resources. Well, a good hunt for a whitetail in southern Manitoba would bring you somewhere between \$2,000 and \$3,000 plus what they spend in other spin-offs from that, so that is not a bad kick, economic kick, in a small community where you have a guiding operation. So you can take those figures and extrapolate them any way you like, but I can tell you that the review that has gone on so far is receiving largely negative response.

**Mr. Struthers:** The minister brings up some good points I think that need to have a full discussion with all the stakeholders involved, and I suppose we could start that or continue it at least here in the Legislature. First of all, the concern that we bring forward has to do with the amount of deer in the area. What the minister says about trading off one spin-off for another is true. What I want to get clear is that the deer population in Zone E, from what I understand, is pretty buoyant for all of Zone E, and if I am not accurate in that, then the minister can correct me. The minister mentions different districts within Zone E, and I would suspect that the number of deer in each of those districts fluctuates up and down as well.

Can the minister indicate how many licences will be issued for deer in this area and whether some of those licences will be earmarked for specific districts of Zone E where the amount of deer can sustain the extra licences?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

**Mr. Cummings:** If the member was asking how many nonresident licences will we issue in Zone E, there will be none, but there will be resident licences of course in pretty much the same numbers as before. There is one area, particularly in the east side, primarily from Winnipeg east, I do not remember the number of the game-hunting area, but we have got people telling us that we probably should not even have a deer licence there this year, that the winterkill two years in a row has been enormous. I understood that there was a better than expected survival last year. I do not think that is true this year. You go to southwestern Manitoba, I am not sure what is there. I know in my area, which would be still in Zone E but closer to Riding Mountain, the population is probably in very good shape.

**Mr. Struthers:** The proposal, however, that the department is putting forth and holding the discussions on, I assume, or I am led to believe through reports that I have read, will increase the number of licences in the area. Now I have heard and read it may be upwards of a thousand licences. If that is something that is not accurate, I would want the minister to indicate that that is not true, but I would also want the minister to tell me how many extra licences over and above from last year is the proposal proposing to increase, and I want to be assured that the deer population in the area can sustain this increase in licences.

**Mr. Cummings:** Setting the precise numbers aside, I do not suppose the member knows anymore than I do about how many deer there are in a particular zone. I am sure what he wants to know is do we have a sustainable harvest of deer, and I will not even attempt to dispute his numbers. They might be right. I do not think entirely right, but nevertheless the number of licences that will be issued will be based on the department's best knowledge of what is available. He might be referring to the issuing of licences to a number of hunters and outfitters across the areas where there are large numbers of outfitters, Riding Mountain north, up into the Ducks and Porcupines and all the way up, and there was a considerable controversy about how many licences should be issued in particular game-hunting areas and whether or not people could transfer into other areas where there were more deer.

All of these licences are based on the clear understanding that we have a knowledge of how many deer are in each area and we are not going to over allocate. So he is correct. He should be given the assurance, and I will give him the assurance that we are not going to overharvest. We tell each outfitter if he has 24 tags or 10 tags or whatever it is that the right to change that number down is arbitrary and possible on the part of the department if in fact we believe there has been a drop in the population that we cannot sustain. It can be increased as well from time to time if the population warrants it or if the demand is there, and it is not being taken up by others who want an opportunity to hunt, but the ability to reduce it because of reduced population is clear.

**Mr. Struthers:** Before I asked the questions, I made the assumption that the Department of Natural

Resources, even before it went out and even talked about a proposal to increase licences in Zone E, would have had a fairly good understanding of at least an approximate number of deer in the area available to be shot. My understanding right now is that in Zone E somebody from outside of the country can use the bow and arrow but they cannot use the rifle, and the proposal is to go to rifle use. Maybe the minister can take another crack at the question.

**Mr. Cummings:** Maybe I misunderstood the first question when he said was there a possibility of increasing the licences by a thousand in Zone E, if that is what he meant, and then extrapolating that to his present question is whether or not we have enough deer, or do we know how many deer. We have a population count. What I referred to a minute ago however is that, as I understand the department's management policy, we have a count or a good estimate of the amount of game that is available, but, remember, when you publish the—you are working six months in advance, sometimes three-quarters of a year in advance when you are issuing the numbers of licences, and you can have a number of things happen. You can have a winter kill.

\* (1640)

You cannot wait until April to determine your winter kill in publishing your big game hunting guide because people who are interested in making their reservations now would like to know what the fees are, where the approximate number of licences will be available, and so on. That is why I said the government through the department always reserves the right to arbitrarily downsize the hunt if something has affected the game or if they have just screwed up in their numbers. I mean, that is possible too.

Disease is also something that we hope we never have to deal with, but that is another thing that could influence the numbers going down. So, yes, I can probably give you a number of deer that is estimated to be in any particular zone, but remember too some of those deer are clustered heavily in certain areas. One of the problems we had frankly is you have an awful lot of deer in heavy populated areas around the Red River Valley. You cannot have a rifle season there. The deer like the fruit trees and shrubs and everything else that

grows around here, but this winter they had even worse problems. So that is the other type.

Speaking of numbers, I am advised that we probably have well over 100,000 deer in this province. Some would say twice as many as that, but we know for sure we are well in excess of 100,000. About 40 percent of our resident hunters hunt in Zone E, so you can see why there is a high level of local interest in what we might do with Zone E. In fact, that was a figure that I had forgotten or overlooked. When you consider 40 percent of the whole of resident hunters in this province operate in Zone E now, they are not looking to have a lot more rifle hunters from out of the country.

**Mr. Struthers:** I appreciate the number of 100,000 deer for the province and that 40 percent hunt in Zone E. Does the department have any numbers on how many of the hundred thousand would be located in Zone E?

**Mr. Cummings:** I do not have the number with me, but whitetailed deer like agricultural country. Second-cut alfalfa is just about the ideal deer pasture, and where there is browse available, the combination of the two—we are pretty sure that the majority of our whitetail are probably in Zone E. I do not have the figure in front of me.

**Mr. Struthers:** If it is just a case of the minister not having the information in front of him and he can get it, I would appreciate having that sent to me once he can. It seems to me that 40 percent of the resident hunters are located in the area, that that is going to be quite a strain on the deer population, especially if the deer population has not wintered very well and there are the number of deaths over the winter that we have been hearing about, at least from the department through the media. The concern is if you add more licences on top of that, you increase the strain on the number of deer in Zone E.

The other thing that I was asking about was whether different hunting areas within Zone E were going to be earmarked differently. One thing that I know just from driving through the area—this is far from being scientific, but I drove up north from Boissevain through the valley, and I saw quite an impressive herd of deer through there last spring. I understand that different

areas of Zone E will have varying amounts of deer in different numbers. I am wondering if it does not make sense to be specific in locating those licences within areas of Zone E that can handle better the increased number of licences, if the minister decides to go ahead with this proposal.

**Mr. Cummings:** We have not made a decision and obviously will not change this year, given that the guides are already out about nonresident hunters in Zone E, but it is correct to say that we can adjust the harvest in various regions within Zone E. That is why I was clear on the fact that we can arbitrarily downsize or eliminate the hunt in certain parts of Zone E, if necessary.

**Mr. Struthers:** I thank the minister for that. I want to stay on the same topic but just switch the angle a little bit to the effect on the hunters who have been hunting in the area in Zone E, the resident hunters. I am interested in trying to get a handle on what the effect of a change towards this kind of a proposal will be on the fellows who have been hunting there over the years. Will there be any decreases in licences that the minister would look at, and secondly, is the minister contemplating any increases in fees for the licences?

**Mr. Cummings:** No. I hope the member would give me a little bit more credit than to think that we would reduce the resident hunt in order to accommodate nonresident hunters. That would be stupid and suicidal, and I hope I have learned to avoid those types of decisions, but resident hunters will continue the first two weeks, and there is no nonresident rifle hunting season and none will occur this year. There are no reductions in numbers today, but I have to reiterate that the southeast region may well be subject to reductions unless we get some better reports.

**Mr. Struthers:** I am glad that the minister would not do anything that would be stupid and suicidal, something that he should probably go back to caucus with and inform some of the rest of his colleagues in other areas of government that they should take those words as wisdom from the minister.

At the same time, there are still people who have been hunting over the years who are going to the minister's public hearings and expressing their concerns

about that very issue. Maybe they do not assume that the minister is not going to do something suicidal, and I would suggest to the minister that all I am doing is bringing their concerns to the Legislature as I am supposed to do as the critic of Natural Resources. I think it is good to put on record as well the fact that nothing is going to change this year, but that does not preclude something from happening next year, in next year's hunting season.

Just to kind of finish up on the area of the deer hunting in Zone E, I would like the minister to have a chance to explain a little more fully the economic benefits that would be gained in this part of the province through the proposal for increasing the deer hunt. He had mentioned \$2,000 to \$3000 for tracking down a white-tailed deer. I would like for him to maybe explain that a little further. I am not just sure what he meant by that. I would also like the minister to indicate the benefits for outfitters from outside of Zone E, north of Riding Mountain and north of Winnipeg, the benefits maybe that the northern outfitters would have in expanding their work south into Zone E.

\* (1650)

**Mr. Cummings:** The member is getting into some pretty hypothetical questions. He has managed to make it sound like we are out there advocating for an additional nonresident hunt in southern Manitoba. We were asked by a number of areas, private interests and public interests, to review the possibility of a nonresident rifle season in southern Manitoba. We all know the nonresident hunt must be a guided hunt so there is significant opportunity for guides to be involved and to earn from that. We are looking at Manitoba lodges and outfitters being about a \$16-million industry per year, so you can extrapolate that in a number of ways.

The member should not assume that this discussion is about whether or not existing outfitters would be able to expand their business, because the province is in fact taking some heat from the existing outfitting industry in the manner in which we are making outfitting of, for example, white-tailed deer in areas where out-of-province nonresident hunters are allowed today, where landowners are being given the first crack at providing an outfitting licence to hold a deer tag. So you do not have to be a professional outfitter. If you want to be an outfitter, the opportunity has been enhanced over the

last couple of years with the types of decisions that we are making.

An outfitter can sell any variety of a package. He can sell residents room and board and guided hunts, meals, provide entertainment if he chooses to. It is a package that he can put together, and included in that is a tag to take one deer. He can run two to three nonresident hunters per guide, and nobody is getting rich but I think it is a good business. When you go out into the part of the country that the member for Dauphin and I are both familiar with and on into some of the areas where there are a lot more Crown lands, what a great asset.

I mean, it ties right into our tourism. People come up to hunt. It does not mean they will not bring their family back. They will certainly talk about it if they have a good experience when they are here. The opportunity for spreading good word and good news about hunting in this province flows from this. That is why I am quite serious about working with the Manitoba Lodges & Outfitters Association to make sure that we have it set up so that there is a guarantee, virtually, of a good quality hunt for those who come here. We cannot provide a guarantee of them taking home game, but you can guarantee that they will have a quality experience. So you need to context this in the full measure of what people do.

I mean, it ties very much into tourism. It is the hospitality industry. In some parts of the province, it is not that well accepted, I suppose, but it certainly is in the part of the country I come from, and I know that there is a lot of very successful lodges and outfitters. Before I came into this office, I thought that maybe there was only a handful south of The Pas, and everyone else who had a lodge or an outfit was on a remote lake somewhere, but that is not true. We have a wonderful array of wildlife and hunting experiences that can occur out there, and given that the American dollar is at a 30 percent premium over ours, that is primarily where some of these customers come from. It can be very worthwhile to provide them with a decent experience when they come here.

**Mr. Struthers:** The minister should not be so suspicious sometimes at the questions I ask. I asked the question so that he could stand on his feet in the House and explain the economic benefits and all the spin-offs of the proposal that, in fact, the Department of Natural

Resources went into southern Manitoba and got an earful on.

So I wanted to give the minister that opportunity to put his case forward as far as this proposal is being proposed. The fact is this government has put the proposal forward, has put it out there for public discussion. They were told, quite loudly from what I hear in public hearings, that there was a lot of concern having to do with the proposal that the minister has put forth. So I just thought I would give him his opportunity to explain the good side of his proposal.

What I would like for the minister to do, as well, in the same vein as the question that I asked previously, is indicate the number of outfitters in Zone E that are there and ready to benefit economically from these increases in licences and give me an idea of how many outfitters will be benefiting in Zone E from the proposal that he is putting forward.

Excluding the outfitters in the north, what I am concerned about is the ones in Zone E in the south who will get a direct benefit from this.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, Mr. Chairman, the member encourages me not to be suspicious and then he gives me a real reason to be suspicious because he stands up and says that the hunting in Zone E is my proposal. It is a public consultation where we are genuinely attempting to take guidance from the public about how they want hunting, particularly deer hunting, to unfold in the populated part of the province.

I just received information from the department. There are probably in excess of 75,000 and perhaps a hundred thousand deer in Zone E. In other words, the person in the department who sent up this information believes that there are closer to 200,000 deer in Manitoba. So the amount that we are taking hunting—remember I said earlier that there are at least a hundred thousand, and there are those who would argue there are as many as 200,000. This estimate, if we have that many in Zone E, would say that we have 150,000 or more in Manitoba, which means that unless there are dramatic winterkills or disasters of that nature that there are a significant number of deer out there.

The conclusion that many people are drawing at these public meetings is that they would like to see—there are

many who went to those meetings who were looking at this as an opportunity to reduce the number of deer that were problem deer, frankly. Many of them left the meetings saying this is not the way to eliminate the problem deer because the hunting pressure probably will not be right where they need it in terms of reducing the number of deer in agricultural Manitoba that are problem deer. I mean we have significant economic spinoffs that are available.

When the member asked how many lodgers and outfitters would benefit from this occurring in Zone E, I get a little suspicious because I am not here to advocate on behalf of the lodgers and the outfitters. We are asking the question, first of all, from the point of view of management of the wildlife. There are in some parts of the province an excess of deer. From that, we have an opportunity for an economic spinoff that could be of value to a lot of people—hoteliers, restauranters. To start off with, it does not have to be the lodgers and the outfitters who will gain. In the fear of some people, it might also be the landowners because we have a policy that says the landowners would have an opportunity to enhance—

\* (1700)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. I am interrupting the proceedings and I will return at 8 p.m.

Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau):** Order, please. Time for private members' hour, proposed resolutions.

### PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

#### Res. 7—Aboriginal Justice Inquiry

**Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), that



“WHEREAS the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry found that the justice system has failed Manitoba's aboriginal people on a massive scale; and

“WHEREAS the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report released on August 29th, 1991, is the most comprehensive study of the justice system ever done in this country; and

“WHEREAS the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report made 306 recommendations and only a tiny fraction of them have been acted upon by the provincial government; and

“WHEREAS the provincial government has repeatedly refused to release its studies and analysis of the recommendations; and

“WHEREAS the provincial government has repeatedly refused to release its studies and analysis of the recommendations; and

“WHEREAS three successive Ministers of Justice have failed to release an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; and

“WHEREAS the Hughes report of November 29, 1996 stated that the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry should be the driving force in bringing forward needed aboriginal initiatives in justice.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the provincial government release all studies and analysis of each of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly request that the provincial government immediately consider commencing work with aboriginal organizations to implement the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly request that the Minister of Justice consider releasing an action plan for the provincial government on implementing the recommendations of the Aboriginal

Justice Inquiry and to make this action plan a key part of his agenda in 1997.”

#### **Motion presented.**

**Mr. Robinson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak again on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, as many of us in the aboriginal community regard this to be a blueprint for an action plan for, it does not matter what level of government, but at least to begin work on many outstanding issues that aboriginal people have been faced with. We have waited patiently, I believe, speaking as an aboriginal person, since 1991 to see some action taken by any level of government. In this case, we are urging the provincial government to take some action and put together an action plan, together with the other levels of government to begin working on the main recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

We all know that the AJI was sparked with the killing death of J. J. Harper on the streets of Winnipeg, and also the death of Helen Betty Osborne in 1971. We have made strides in that particular case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through our own initiative. We had a healing conference at the Ferndale Institution in British Columbia in December and we were able, through the aboriginal way of seeking justice, to be able to get Mr. Johnston to give details about how the murder occurred in 1971. We took great pride in that in the aboriginal community, because it was something that the police authorities were unable to do for many years. We believe that and some other things that had been going on prior to the AJI being released in 1991—the Hollow Water holistic healing program, for example, that has been under the direction of Burma Bushie and others in the Hollow Water community has been a strong program with respect to how sexual offenders and some of the offences that have occurred in our community over the years have been dealt with in a traditional sense. So we are very proud of the people in Hollow Water.

We have at times commended this government as well in working with communities like Hollow Water and also St. Theresa Point in some of the things that they are working on, but there is a lot more to be done. Where we have to begin is dealing with the First Nations communities and aboriginal communities on a

government-to-government relationship basis. We heard that in the throne speech very recently, and we have to develop these partnership arrangements. There was an action plan that I was involved with in 1991 after the release of the AJI and that was through the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg while I was its president, and also together with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Manitoba Metis Federation, the Indigenous Women's Collective, and we developed a plan that was, unfortunately, not embraced by this government. We thought it was a workable plan which would involve to some degree the city government, the Winnipeg City Police and also the federal government and also the RCMP in dealing with some of the outstanding issues. We have to commend the Winnipeg City Police because I believe that they are the group that has taken the AJI seriously and have made some strides in trying to recruit more aboriginal people into the Winnipeg City Police force. We commend the work of the Winnipeg City Police in that regard.

I also realize that there is a federal-provincial pilot project that is happening right now with the MKO communities, nine of them, that is a partnership arrangement. That is something that was strongly emphasized by both Judge Sinclair and now retired Justice Hamilton with respect to a magistrate's program in northern Manitoba. We are very happy about this pilot project which encompasses about \$400,000, and we think it is a wise investment in that sort of work that is necessary in those northern Manitoba communities.

\* (1710)

The fly-in sports program as well, which is now known as the Northern Youth Summer Program, is something that I have raised in Question Period here before, and we are glad that this provincial government is working with First Nations communities. Prior to this latest announcement by the minister, of course, this was delivered by a Mochikitahwak program which is an offshoot of the Keewatin Tribal Council in Thompson which represents a number of First Nations communities in northern Manitoba. The correct spelling of that is M-o-c-h-i-k-i-t-a-h-w-a-k, and in the Cree language it means to embrace the moment, to have a good time. That is what that word means in the Cree language. Of course, together with the Manitoba Sports council, now these programs have been amalgamated,

and therefore the youth program has been announced which encompasses something like \$100,000.

The Hollow Water program which a number of First Nations communities, aboriginal people, throughout Canada and even the United States have viewed as a model and have come to Hollow Water, and there was a national story on the work that is being done by the people at Hollow Water with respect to sexual abuse, for example, a major problem that exists, unfortunately, in many aboriginal communities. We believe that the program has to be funded a little more. Yes, they do receive funding from this government, but with the amount of work they do, with the amount of requests they get, perhaps their funding should be improved.

Allow me to get back to the recommendations of the AJI and the issues that it identified of aboriginal people. It says that it has failed Manitoba's aboriginal people on a massive scale. It has been insensitive and inaccessible and has arrested and imprisoned aboriginal people in grossly disproportionate numbers. Aboriginal people who are arrested are more likely than nonaboriginal people to be denied bail, spend more time in pretrial detention, spend less time at their lawyers and if convicted are likely to be incarcerated. This continues on to this day, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Further, in the forward of the AJI, of course, the commissioners talk about the situation involving aboriginal people and the justice system deteriorating rather than improving, and the reason would seem that aboriginal distance from Manitoba's justice system is simply not a geographical phenomenon but it is also one of a cultural nature. The delivery of justice to aboriginal people in aboriginal communities through the provincial court system is inequitable and inadequate and, again, we flag that because we know it.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

We recall when the AJI was first announced. We had, for example, on the federal side the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, who at that time was an opposition member of Parliament who embraced it and wanted debate on it at the earliest opportunity, but that was the last we ever heard of that. So we do not want to see the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Mr. Acting Speaker, join the Hughes report and the Royal Commission, and I want

to talk about that briefly, simply be used as doorstops, and I believe those were the words of the Deputy Premier, that we would not see at that time that the AJI would become a doorstop. We want to see some meaningful development on the AJI.

As recently as February 5, 1996, George Muswagon, the Grand Chief of the MKO, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okemakanak, wrote in a letter to then Justice minister Vodrey saying that the escalating incidence of crime among aboriginal people is not only distressingly threatening to the aboriginal people themselves, and negative ramifications are contributing to the social and economic fabric of the larger society, and we all can feel that.

Our basic, traditional values are based on a respect of the spirit world, desire for harmony and well-being in the interpersonal relationships, justice and freedom consistent with the principles of collective law. These values have been invalidated by the Status system or the Indian Act, which precludes any aboriginal social perceptive faculty and competency.

The AJI not only spends time talking about the inequities in justice, but it goes back to what aboriginal justice is, the role of peacemakers. The recommendations also include the argument for aboriginal justice systems, and we believe those to be workable on certain matters, that we do not have to wait for long delays in trial that could be dealt with in the community.

For example, in the community of Shamattawa most recently the chief has made it a point that alcohol will not come into the community because of the problems that it causes, and she has made an effort in ensuring that alcohol does not come into the community. The same could be said about solvent abuse and drugs that are coming into communities, and there has been a concerted effort made by First Nations communities, and we commend them for that.

Simply what this resolution calls for then, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that this government begin detailing an action plan that will involve the major aboriginal organizations in this province, including the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Metis Federation and others that are interested in this to some degree as well,

the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, including the women.

We do not believe that there has been enough, and I am sure the other side will get up and talk about the things that they have done but, from the First Nations community and the aboriginal community, there has been really no progress in implementing the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. As the resolution itself reads, there were 306 recommendations. Over 100 of them relate directly with the Province of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I will conclude at that, and I would like to ask the support of all members in embracing this resolution because this certainly gives all of us in this Legislature an opportunity to talk about something meaningful and perhaps give aboriginal people in this province some hope that this government and this Manitoba Legislative Assembly does take their issues seriously. Thank you.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to put a few comments on the record as well in respect to this issue. It is certainly an issue that is an important one to the people of Manitoba and indeed to the specific community, the aboriginal people that this resolution specifically is concerned with. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was an extensive study of many, many issues. Indeed, as the resolution indicates, there were over 300 recommendations that were made by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and many of those were good recommendations, recommendations that have served to guide this government in the implementation of a number of programs and policy and legislative directions.

One of the things that is very unfortunate about this specific resolution is that it fails to address a very major issue, and that is while there were 306 resolutions or recommendations made, it I think unfairly indicates that only a few of them have been acted on by the provincial government. One of the things that the resolution fails to recognize is that of the 306 recommendations, more than half of them, or approximately one-half of them, fall exclusively within federal jurisdiction. I think that is a problem that needs to be addressed in addressing this specific situation.

\* (1720)

Our justice system is one where there is a shared responsibility, not just between federal and provincial authorities but indeed municipal authorities. I think for the purposes of the record it is very clear that we have to take cognizance of that fact. While I, as the Attorney General of the Province of Manitoba and charged with the responsibility of enforcing criminal law legislation, the way our constitutional system works is that it is the federal government that has the authority to pass criminal law amendments. Indeed our entire criminal justice system, while the substantive legal principles and offences are set out in our Criminal Code or a Young Offenders Act, or similar legislation, the Narcotics Control Act, in many of these cases, since specifically the Criminal Code and the Young Offenders Act, the responsibility for enforcing the legislation is placed in the hands of the local Attorney General.

When I say responsibility for enforcement, I mean the prosecution of offences under those acts. Our constitutional system also recognizes the responsibility of local government, municipalities to actually do the day-to-day, street-level enforcement of our criminal law. So what we see here is a necessity for all three governments to act in concert in order to bring about any long-lasting effective policy or program, very essential that all three levels of government participate in this.

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

I know the issue, for example, and this is related to the entire problem, this is a more recent example of this problem. The problem of the Firearms Act that is being brought in by the federal Liberal government, essentially bringing about new criminal law and then essentially requesting the province to enforce its legislation, even in cases where we think that this legislation is not the appropriate mechanism to deal with what is an admittedly serious problem.

It is this lack of co-operative federalism that is behind the problem in issues like the Firearms Act and, indeed, like the Young Offenders Act. These are specific manifestations of a much, much greater problem. Under the Young Offenders Act, for example, we have

stated to the federal government that we do not think that the arbitrary age of 12 before one can be charged with an offence under the Young Offenders Act in the Criminal Code is appropriate. We feel that there should be discretion left in the hands of the judiciary to, in those appropriate cases, bring young offenders within the scope of the act. No one is saying that we should be sending these young offenders to Millhaven or Stony Mountain or even Headingley jail, but the judiciary should retain that amount of discretion in appropriate cases, bringing the resources of the justice system to bear upon those children.

Yet the federal government has refused to acknowledge that very, very serious problem. Indeed, when I raised this issue with the federal Justice minister a month or so ago in a public meeting, or should I say in a meeting of all the other Justice ministers, their response was that the problem was not really that serious. Indeed, one of his bureaucrats indicated that there had only been in Canada eight murders by people under the age of 12 years old, and so the situation was not that serious.

I am not blaming the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats were simply bringing the information forward. This is bad law. It is bad policy, and what is bad is for the children that do not learn to recognize that there are consequences for the actions that they bring. Again, this is a problem that shows how provinces, municipalities and the federal government have to work together in a co-ordinated fashion.

I know the Winnipeg Free Press was overly concerned, I think, when they criticized me for the position that I took with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Oh, oh, point of order, I think.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** I have been listening very attentively on this very serious resolution brought forward by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson). I know he feels very strongly about this resolution. I have been listening to the minister's comments about gun control, about young offenders, and I am really looking for the relevancy of it to deal with this very serious resolution this member has brought forward. I am sure he would like it debated as

opposed to gun control or the Young Offenders Act. I would like to hear any speakers' comments in regard to that resolution and not on a number of other issues that, although debatable, are not the subject of this resolution.

**Mr. Toews:** I think the point that I am making is absolutely crucial to this entire area. The question that it is shared responsibility between federal, provincial and municipal authorities, and that the problems I am pointing out with the Young Offenders Act, with the Firearms Act, are indicative of a broader problem, that when we go to address these issues—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson):** I thank both honourable members for their words of advice. I would ask all members, in speaking to the resolution, to keep their words as relevant as possible.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you for that direction.

**An Honourable Member:** An action plan for the province.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

**Mr. Toews:** Yes, and I think when we need to raise and deal with an action plan, we have to get all the parties together at the same table. The issue of gangs, for example, which is to some extent an aboriginal justice issue given the component of the gangs clearly recognized by aboriginal community leaders, that this is a problem that they share in as well.

What is very, very clear is that the federal government has to be at the table. The Justice Minister Allan Rock is very fond of saying that we have to get all the players on one side of the table and the problems on the other side of the table. I think that when we are talking about the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and some of the issues, yes, let us make sure that all the players are at the table ready to deal with these issues so that it can be dealt with in a comprehensive way.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report is in fact an indication of that very problem, that more than half of

the recommendations made relate to federal jurisdiction, so without the federal government taking an active interest in the resolution of these problems, the province, under its constitutional authority, can only do so much.

I know there are other speakers in the House who want to deal with this particular issue. I trust that some of them will be going into some of the detail of the province's endeavours in this respect. I am by no means suggesting that we ignore specifics of what the province has already done. The province has done many things. I believe in respect of our justice system itself, while it is recognized that there can only be one justice system for Canada, everyone is entitled to justice in Canada, but that does not mean that the specifics of the situation cannot be altered or accommodated to meet specific needs.

I can think of no clearer example than the issue of how the aboriginal community has been affected by our justice situation. It would be an understatement to say that they are overrepresented in our justice community. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 12 percent of our population in the province of Manitoba is aboriginal and yet of the jails that I have toured that fall under my jurisdiction, in many of them a majority of the inmates are of aboriginal descent. There is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed.

\* (1730)

Specifically, in speaking about Corrections, I had a conversation up in The Pas with the community there, with the chiefs in The Pas and I have had a chance to speak to them twice in the last few months. There was real interest expressed in the community in the natives running their own jail. One of the suggestions that was made was the jail north of The Pas, the Egg Lake camp. They thought that would be an ideal place to put into practice philosophies and programs that were more suitable to the natives concept of justice. Those are the kinds of things that I want my department to continue to work on.

Yes, even though I can say in the House here today that all of the recommendations by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry do not fall within our jurisdiction, there are many areas where we can and indeed have moved

to ensure that the justice situation, the justice system is more reflective of the community.

One of the things that we can learn from, for example, is the northern magistrates program. We, in many of the isolated communities, have brought magistrates into specific communities. This assists the community, gives the community a sense of ownership, a sense of belonging to the justice system. Not only have these additions to our justice system, these unique additions, brought this sense of ownership, they in fact have taught us that we can learn from aboriginal concepts regarding justice, that these indeed are concepts that we can bring in to influence our justice system generally. Concepts such as the family group conferencing, which is essentially an aboriginal idea brought from New Zealand or Australia, embraced now by many—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** I want to first quote from the conclusion, the last words of the AJI report. It states: Canada's treatment of its first citizens has been an international disgrace. To fail to take every step needed to address this lingering injustice will continue to bring tragedy and suffering to aboriginal people, and to blacken our country's name throughout the world. By acting now, governments can give positive expression to the public support and good will we have encountered from Manitobans during the last three years.

At the beginning of the report, indeed the first words are the date, August 12, 1991. I think the warning, strong words of the conclusion have to be related to those first words being the date in the report, a date that is now almost six years ago. I think that in itself is part of our social tragedy here in Manitoba.

In the inquiry a concern about the follow-up to the recommendations are noted. Indeed Chief Louis Stevenson on behalf of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs stated, "It must be abundantly clear that any recommendations that flow from this Inquiry and stated in unequivocal terms, that these recommendations have to be actioned, otherwise this Inquiry will result only in

an exercise that builds up the hope of Indian people only to devastate whatever little faith that remains."

Then Chief Oscar Lathlin of The Pas band stated, of course before he was a member, and I quote, "This is the biggest fear that we have of this Inquiry, that nothing will be done once the Inquiry is over."

So then, as a result of that fear expressed, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry made a recommendation, or a series of them, regarding a strategy for action to ensure that this monumental work of such great promise to the future integrity and working of our community here in Manitoba, they set out there, for example, the recommendation that there be an aboriginal justice commission established by legislation with a board of equal numbers of aboriginal and government representatives, an independent chair. The commission's task was to be the monitoring and assisting government implementation of the recommendations of this inquiry.

I think that was a good recommendation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are certainly other ways to begin to implement the recommendations in this report in a comprehensive way, and there are other ways to monitor progress, but there was one example. There are others in here talking about how action can be facilitated. I think it is the saddest comment that one has to make, to observe that the inquiry recommendations even on the framework that could allow the implementation of the report has not been implemented.

Now, I heard from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) again today the kinds of arguments that have been made by ministers of Justice in the past, recently in Manitoba, when it comes to demands on this government to take action on critical issues of public safety and justice. The response is blame the federal government. Bring the feds into the argument. Make them the scapegoat. Build up a case that all of the justice concerns can really be solved most effectively by changing what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Criminal Code, because that is the primary federal responsibility in the area of justice.

I mean, that is the thinking that holds, not only that the solutions to public safety concerns are police and

prosecutions, but even going further, that the real ultimate solution is simply by changing the Criminal Code, and I think that is a terribly simplistic and, indeed, erroneous and politically motivated answer to a call on the provincial government for action.

\* (1740)

Of course, the minister then goes on to say that over half of the recommendations in the inquiry are exclusively federal. Well, why is it that the government's own news release, following the release of the AJI in January of 1992 said that only 19 percent were within federal jurisdiction, and why is it that that same news release said that the largest grouping in there, that is 36 percent, were entirely provincial?

Even if you look at this report which said that 22 percent were to be joint federal-provincial, I ask, for all the recommendations, where is the leadership from this province? How can they just get up and say, well, it is up to the federal government. I have not heard this government scream about the federal position on AJI. I will take a few minutes to do that for what it is worth, not because over half of the recommendations are federal but because, indeed, the federal government does have a role to play, and I would not be fulfilling my role if I did not express concern. I mean, there was Lloyd Axworthy back in August of 1991 who did say the real success of the work that has been done in Manitoba—he was talking about AJI—will be measured by the actions of the federal government.

But my focus, by definition of my job description, what people sent me to work for, was to talk about the provincial government. It was Jim Downey, the then minister responsible for Native Affairs—he was the chair of the Native Affairs committee of cabinet—who said way back when, we will be judged by time as it goes on, and he was referring to the implementation of the recommendations. But, once again, one year after receiving such a substantive document, it is a little much to expect miracles to take place.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who is talking about miracles almost six years later? It was the same minister who said in August of 1993 that this report is not going to be a doorstep in someone's office, and we have seen this as a doorstep to the offices of at least

three ministers of Justice, at least the same number of ministers of Native Affairs. It is a dusty, dusty doorstep.

Now, it is interesting to hear from the federal Minister of Justice when he came to town a few weeks ago for the invited guests' meeting to talk about gangs. The Minister of Justice at the federal level was commending the Province of Saskatchewan. There was no political motivation, I suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for him to reference Saskatchewan, but he congratulated Saskatchewan's move to partner with the federal government on what is known as the National Aboriginal Justice Initiatives Program. Saskatchewan, he said, was leading the country, leading the nation in taking positive initiatives to respond to the need for new approaches to justice for our First Nations. Yet in the province that is the home of the AJI we do not see that kind of a track record.

What we did see was an appropriation of \$1 million for Aboriginal Justice Initiatives coming up every year for the last three or four years in the Estimates. Now, this year we noted that that item had disappeared, and the minister responded, well, now those items have been put into the line by line in the department. We will be interested to see whether in fact monies have also been shifted or whether there will be a new competition for resources within the line by line between the aboriginal and the existing justice system.

The government always used the excuse and the example, or the example, excuse me, of several—well, let us for example use the St. Theresa Point youth justice initiative up there as one of the uses for that \$1-million fund. We know that project at St. Theresa Point predated the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. In fact, it was referenced as an example of the wonderful things that can happen with youth justice committees and community-based justice, and I believe it was stated in there that youth crime became virtually nonexistent in that community, and they attributed it to the work of that court. But the government came by and said, well, look what we are doing as a result of the AJI report, look at St. Theresa Point. You know, it was not even telling the truth.

We are seeing in Manitoba a very, very rapid change in our community. I think just even in the last three or

four years our city here, for example, in Winnipeg is not the same city that it was three or four years ago. It has become more violent. The growth, the emergence of street gangs is on everyone's mind. It does not seem to be on the mind of the government very much, and I have said time and time again, how they could ignore that as an issue to itself within both the throne speech and budget speech is beyond me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That they have not come back yet despite the emergence of these street gangs three or four years ago with a comprehensive plan is bewildering and I think threatening.

They have now, this government, become part of the problem, and I believe that if the government had taken heed of the recommendations of the spirit of the AJI, of its promise, and do as it said in its news release in 1992 that acceptance of the recommendations could alter the role of aboriginals in Manitoba society, I believe that things would have been different today, that the predominance of the disproportionate involvement of aboriginal youth in our street gangs would have been different, that their disproportionate involvement in the justice system would have been different.

Who else says that? It is not some New Democrat. It is Mr. Justice Hughes. Well, he may be a New Democrat. I do not believe he was able to vote for some period of time. He is retired now. But I do not think there is any political bent to Mr. Hughes. He was retained by this government after their careful selection but, in November 1996, here comes AJI again. Mr. Hughes says to the government, I think you had better look at those recommendations, because they go to the essence of what happened at Headingley Jail. They go the essence of what is happening with street gangs. They go the essence of what is happening with the increase of violence in Manitoba society. We are, what, three or four times the increase in violence crime of all the other provinces in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are out of wack, and Mr. Hughes says, it would seem to me that if change is going to occur, the Hamilton-Sinclair report should be the significant driving force. He goes on to say that as commendable as that \$1 million in the budget was, the one that is gone now, these accomplishments, as commendable as they are, the offsetting factor that cannot be overlooked is that the numbers insofar as

incarceration are concerned show no signs of improvement. They must improve, and he goes on, when he talks about the real solution, particularly to gangs, to again cite the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and I would refer members opposite to read that. People in the know, people who have looked at the situation, people on the street, the aboriginal communities know the promise that is held by the AJI recommendations and the promise that this government has turned its back on. Thank you.

**Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this resolution, but against it.

The value of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report has primarily been in changing attitudes and providing an education. It has also attracted the attention of the aboriginal communities, whether they be Status Indian or non-Status Indian or Metis or what is just called "northerners," and the urban aboriginal population who do not identify themselves with any particular group as well. The broader community, the multicultural community of this province, has benefited from the attention focused on the perspective of our justice system through aboriginal eyes and those people who made presentations to the inquiry commission.

\* (1750)

However, it is oversimplistic, I would submit, to just take the recommendations in the report and check them off as if that has the answers, that that is the total answer. It is simply a contribution to an ongoing consideration of a very complex situation, and the solution is lying more and more, it appears, in the eyes of the communities themselves, I would submit, and in the government people, whether federal, provincial or municipal. The solution appears to lie in the people themselves, in grassroots approaches.

My experience in my participation in government so far, making a considerable effort to try and understand the magnitude of the problem, the nature of the problem, that is, doing justice, is that it is a kind of challenge that is not just within the four corners of what has traditionally been called the justice system or the Justice department. Even the aboriginal approach to justice is a small "j" approach to justice, and it is more holistic than legal systems, than lawyers and judges.



Through the eyes and the mouths of the aboriginals that I have heard speak, whether they be elders or youth, or those in the middle, when they speak of justice, they are talking about something entirely different than lawyers talk about or judges have traditionally talked about. They are talking about the broadest kind of dispute resolution. They are talking about holistic health, and they are talking about healing. Justice is just one component of a multifaceted approach to doing small "j" justice and doing healing and doing health improvement.

Having said that, what our government is doing, I would submit, and now highlighted in a way like never before in the recent throne speech of this government. Our government is approaching the challenge in a holistic way. I am pleased that the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) highlighted some of those kinds of grassroots and holistic solutions.

The one that he mentioned, which is a good example of a greater commitment by our government, is the Northern Youth Summer Program. That was supported to the extent of \$50,000 in 1996. This year our government has supported it to the extent of \$100,000. That is a contribution which is intended to be at least matched by the federal government and also matched by the community and the corporate community. Some of that funding, as I understand it, is going to be used to hire fundraising people, because the corporate organization, which was described by that honourable member, Mochikitahwak, is committed to operating and owning that program now for their second year of involvement and making it sustainable and better.

We must not forget also that that kind of program which is focused on not only providing activity for young people, is also a source of employment for many northerners, many northerners who are members of the bands in the MKO group. The program is status-blind. It serves not just bands, but it also serves northern communities, and those northern communities fall within my portfolio as Minister of Northern Affairs.

Those communities, just like the bands, pay for participation in this program, so they gain the strengthening of those young people in the form of when they come home, they contribute by being role models and by being better citizens. They have learned

to get along. They have learned some of the sorts of things you learn by being involved in sports and learning experiences with other young people from other communities. They then contribute to the development over the long term of healthy, sustainable and more self-reliant communities, which are the mission of those of my department with respect to northern communities.

This is very consistent with what is happening, of course, with the devolution process, the dismantling process of Indian Affairs with respect to Status Indian bands in the North. So that is one example of a holistic kind of solution and an investment of importance which will bring long-term benefits. It is no accident that the source of that funding is the Justice department's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Initiatives fund.

There is a whole host of other investments of the same kind that is broad based, focused on the community, focused on you, and these come in a variety of different ways. For example, when I was in Thompson for the Easter weekend and Easter spring break, participating in the youth conference on that weekend and then the justice conference, introducing the First Nations justice strategy throughout the week, I noted the various ways that our government is making a contribution. Our government supported the youth conference in Thompson. It was an aboriginal youth conference. The commitment of those young people was demonstrated just by the fact the opening of the conference was on Good Friday at five o'clock in the afternoon, and the work began at that time. The organizers of that conference were the very Greg McIvor, who is the executive director of the corporation that runs the Northern Youth Summer Program, and two individual aboriginal youths who did credit to their communities and credit to their people. They attracted over 200 young people, 200 aboriginals from the different northern communities to that conference, and they participated on the Saturday of Easter weekend and the Sunday of Easter weekend and then on Easter Monday as well.

I was proud, as a member of government, to have supported that financially and to have supported it also by being there and learning from them and sharing with them. Similarly, with the First Nations justice strategy, which lasted for three days that same week—this is a unique initiative, and it involves a provincial

investment of over \$400,000 from the Department of Justice. I am very proud of our government's support of this initiative. It is doing, in an evolving way, the sorts of things, some of the good things that the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry has asked of the government of Manitoba.

The way that that conference was set up was again working towards a solution in that long-term investment kind of way that I have been talking about. They had three representatives from each of the 26 MKO bands there, and I had a chance to meet with them. I had a chance to spend a great deal of time conversing with them and learning about each of their perspectives on justice and the communities' perspectives on justice and, you know, I was very pleased.

I have heard the honourable member from Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) talk about the defecating

in buckets from Shamattawa, and I, in some exchanges with my honourable friend, have indicated that I thought that was one of the most beautiful places in the world to live, to work, to raise a family—truly one of the most beautiful settings in the world.

The same with Tadoule Lake, and I met with people from both of those areas and they were there; three of them from each of those areas, to come back and bring home more knowledge so they could have justice committees. It was interesting, the majority of them were females.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining. The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will resume in Committee of Supply at 8 p.m.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 14, 1997

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