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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 14, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes and the rules of the House, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair, please.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask leave that we proceed directly to Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to consider Bill 219? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 219—The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act; Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to again speak to Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act. I first introduced this act in 2005. So this is four years later. I'm still quite passionate about the issue and want to see this moved forward.

The purpose of this bill: It is an act that governs collection, use and disclosure of personal information on employees, volunteers, contractors, organizations in a manner that recognizes both the right of an individual to have his or her personal information protected and the needs of organizations to collect, use and disclose personal information for purposes that are reasonable. It also contains a duty-to-notify clause, Madam Deputy Speaker, that

would be groundbreaking in terms of this bill and across Canada.

I just want to refer to the size of this bill. It's quite a large bill because when I first introduced it I was in the House, hearing government members on the opposite side criticizing private members' bills as being not very substantial. So I thought, well, I'll make this bill substantial. Brian Bowman, a privacy lawyer, an expert in the field, drafted the bill. So I think that it is very substantial and, in fact, ready to go, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Just some background on privacy legislation: We have The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in the province, which governs how information is collected, used and disclosed within public bodies. So government and their agencies, municipalities, health organizations, anything that falls under the purview of government, the FIPPA legislation would cover.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a federal legislation called the Personal Information Protection and Electronics Document Act, or PIPEDA, as we call it for short, which governs federally regulated bodies and commercial activities within provinces. This legislation was brought in in 2004 and was intended to be a catalyst for other provinces to enact substantially similar legislation to take it over upon themselves. Québec, Alberta and B.C. have done that. They have done that.

But, with all of this legislation, there still remains a gap in privacy legislation, and that being there is no provision for protection of personal information in the private sector. So, if you work in the private sector, you have a breach of your privacy, there's really no recourse within the province. As a matter of fact, you would have to take your concerns to Ottawa.

I do note that this bill, although the NDP have not paid much attention to it over the last four years, I'd also like to note that there has been a considerable amount of attention across the country on this legislation. I've had calls on this from all across the country asking me on the status of this bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what it does is it does provide a made-in-Manitoba solution, and it's very business friendly because I'll say if there's a breach

in personal information in the private sector, there's no way that you can take that to the Ombudsman in this province, because the Ombudsman only oversees the FIPPA legislation and the PHIA legislation because there is no legislation that covers the private sector.

So, you would have to take your concerns to Ottawa, to the federal Privacy Commissioner, and that would mean hiring a lawyer, and it would be quite costly to do that.

So, if there was a breach, if there was some legislation in Manitoba that were provisions for how this would be dealt with, that it would then fall under the purview, should a bill be passed, that would fall under the purview of our Ombudsman here in Manitoba.

*(10:10)

Now, over the last four years, I've spoken on this bill. I brought it up to the House, and there have been a number of arguments against it that it's not substantially similar legislation because of no redress provision in the bill. Well, as we all know, it's a private member's bill, and financial penalties cannot be brought into a private member's bill. So we recognize that, but would certainly support an amendment if the government wanted to do that in this bill.

They've also said that there'd be two laws that would be confusing. No, that is not the case, because substantially similar legislation in the province overrides the federal legislation and would take precedence, so there would only be one law in the province, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it would encompass the private sector.

There's also been an argument that it would be an imposition on business, but businesses that conduct commercial activity already are very well aware of how they need to protect the consumers' information that they are dealing with. It's the employees of the company that are not covered by any protective measures.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't think that anybody can argue against protecting personal information. As we know, identity theft is the new crime and personal information is the new currency. Identity theft has been growing across the country, and we do know that in one study done it's a growing concern among 73 percent of Canadians.

Now, how do people get somebody's personal information? Well, we've all heard about instances where company information or medical information has been dumped in the dumpster, people find it and they're able to get information that way. On-line computer scams are a big problem. It's called phishing, where they can seek personal information and people give it, and personal information is used to create new identities or to do commercial fraud, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Another thing where personal information is gathered from is laptops and BlackBerrys. Now those are everywhere, in every workplace, not just government agencies, but the private sector. In the private sector, somebody taking home some work to do, maybe has payroll data on the laptop, and if that is stolen, then all that information is not protected. It's available to the public, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we do know in the workplace there's a considerable amount of collection of personal information. If you're employed in the private sector, they have your name and your address, sometimes, your date of birth, your next of kin, your social insurance number, and if there's a direct deposit for your paycheque, they have your bank account number. All of those things are just the ingredients necessary to create identify fraud or identity theft.

So there needs to be protections. I know that, in 2007, a Canadian anti-fraud call centre had 10,000 complaints of ID theft and ID fraud, losses of \$6 million, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that's the last stats that are available.

I also want to speak about something recently that happened last year, where 32,000 Canadian farmers were on the alert after learning a laptop containing their financial information had been stolen. The laptop was stolen when a programmer working for Canadian Canola Growers Association took the machine off site for routine maintenance. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is just an example of how inadvertently personal information can be out into the world of identity theft and identity fraud.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want to say, people talk about firewalls, passwords, encryptions, but these are only appetizers for the truly advanced hacker. Anybody that can create an encryption, can decode an encryption. We rely too heavily on that.

I just wanted to say—I know my time is running short—that privacy is a fundamental right according to the Supreme Court of Canada, and our loss of personal information can lead to our loss in privacy.

What we need to do is we need to ensure, in every way that we can, public sector, private sector, that there is protection of our personal information because, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we all know, once you lose your privacy, you do not get it back.

I feel that it's really important for the government to look at this bill. I hope that we could have some public input on this bill by passing this bill to committee, and have the public come and have what they want to say about this. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's one of those things where people don't often talk about a loss of personal information because they know that it is a responsibility of people to look after their personal information. But if they're giving personal information in to the workplace, it should be also up to the workplace to look after that personal information.

What happens when people lose their personal information, it's an embarrassing thing. They don't often report it. In fact, very seldom do people report it unless it's a very, very serious issue, and once they report this issue, the statistics say that it takes literally hundreds and thousands of hours to sometimes be able to reclaim their losses, if possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I rise to speak to this issue of identity theft and identity fraud as a victim of identity fraud, Madam Deputy Speaker.

One of the challenges that we have as legislators is the fact that technology is introduced, it doesn't come with all the safeguards and we find ourselves responding to that technology. I know, as a teacher, when the Internet was first introduced, I thought that would be an incredible tool for educational purposes. But we all know that the Internet has been used for rather subversive means, such as being a distributor of pornography, for cyber-bullying, for a number of different issues or means that certainly was not the intent of the technology but has been an unintended consequence. We, as legislators, have to keep up with some of these unintended consequences of technology and, as such, in my own personal experience, I had been a victim of identity fraud on the Internet. So I know really personally how that feels, to have your identity and your integrity called into question on a profile on the Internet. This is something that is very important to me.

Certainly, when you consider what federal legislation already exists, the protections that are in place, it provides sufficient protections and complaint processes for the public. I've had very good success in addressing my personal issue through the local authorities, and I know that the individual that was responsible for that will likely be identified and held accountable for those actions.

But Manitoba is certainly doing a lot to address the issue of identity theft. Manitoba is doing a lot to address the issue of identity fraud. The Personal Investigations Amendment Act, Identity Protection, was brought in by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and anyone who is concerned that their identity is being used by someone else has the ability to place a security alert on their credit card. These are issues that, of course, are very important as we know that—as I said—the unintended consequences of technology can allow people access to this information and allow people access to a lot of things that would provide a credible profile where they could actually pass off themselves of being someone other than who they are, indeed.

The ID theft prevention Web site that was set up by the government in '06 includes access to an ID theft prevention kit, ID check list, contact information for a variety of organizations and resources. So there are a lot of supports out there to respond to any situation individuals might find themselves in where somebody has, indeed, committed fraud or committed an identity theft. The Web site is a way for Manitobans to be cautious about giving your personal information. I know you often get phone calls at home, and people are asking you very personal questions, asking you questions about your income, your marital status. They do ask for very personal information, such as your social insurance number, things of that nature which can put you in a compromising situation. Because, of course, we all know that these questions are the same questions that credit card companies would ask in your application for credit.

* (10:20)

So we know that there are a lot of individuals who are out there taking advantage of the trusting nature of people when they agree that they'll participate in telephone surveys and things of that nature, or on-line, as the Member for Morris identifies. On-line there are predators who will try to take advantage through the social networks, through the e-mail access, through a person perusing a

particular Web site and getting into your computer where they can contact you and ask you for some information. If people aren't careful in divulging that information, they might, indeed, be setting themselves up for potential identity theft and identity fraud.

So there are a number of measures that have been taken in the past to combat identity theft, and that includes the Identity Theft Kit for Business. Now, that helps businesses take the necessary steps to prevent identity theft, and it's a valuable tool for businesses. We know, if we go to a restaurant or go to a business where we engage in a transaction with our credit cards or even using our ATM cards, there is potential for fraud. We know that, so it's important that businesses are a big part of this discussion.

Giving the Identity Theft Kit for Business, developing that for that purpose, to assist businesses in preventing identity theft—because, of course, that might make the business culpable in some way, shape, or form as well. So it's very important that all individuals have some vehicle, where your identity might be necessary for a transaction, or where some personal information is necessary for a transaction, it's important that they have the tools so they can recognize that they have to exercise caution to address any of the concerns that individuals might have when they do come forward and provide some of that personal information.

Personally, I've always been very cautious. I'm not a fan of doing my banking on-line; I prefer to do it in person. I'm not a fan of engaging in some of these activities where you're not entirely sure that information you're providing is going to remain your own information. You know that there are potential predators out there who could take advantage of you posting information or using on-line services, and they can tap into some of that information you've provided, so I'm not a fan of that, quite frankly. I prefer to do things the old fashioned way in many ways because, yes, there are firewalls, there are protections put in place, but again, the technology, what it's designed for, what it is intended for, there's often the unintended consequence of that technology because people will find a way to take advantage of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also have the Consumer Measures Committee Identity Theft working group. That's a subcommittee that works with the federal-provincial-territorial committee of Consumer Affairs. They're working under the

minister's direction and making recommended amendments to the Criminal Code because indeed, this is a criminal offence, and many of the issues that we're talking about today are already addressed through the Criminal Code, but the Criminal Code has to evolve with the technology and it has to evolve with the predatorial nature of individuals who wish to take advantage of that technology.

It recommends changes regarding notification of security breaches, and it's being looked at in the federal legislation right now. The working group on credit report harmonization has considered the issue of security so as to try for a harmonized approach as well. So there are a lot of different groups that are engaged in this because this is a very far-reaching issue. As I said, one decision that you make as a consumer can put your information at risk.

One decision an individual makes, whether knowingly or unknowingly, as a service provider, can put your information at risk, and the mention of the fact that there was a computer taken home for servicing that put a number of individual farmers at risk with the information that was made available, or lost, potentially lost, because of that particular individual's actions.

There's a lot of legislation that currently protects Manitoba consumers against identity theft. There's the fraud and impersonation, as matters that fall under the Criminal Code. This was in November '07, the federal government introduced legislation proposing Criminal Code amendments that would have permitted police to intervene at an earlier stage of criminal operations before identity fraud or other crimes which actually cause financial or other harms are attempted or committed. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada declared that his government continued to be committed to cracking down on identity theft and organized crime.

Certainly, under provincial legislation, under The Consumer Protection Act, it limits consumers' liability to \$50 when a credit card is lost or stolen or the credit card information is used to make fraudulent purchases. We know that this type of fraud, there are some provisions under the credit card companies, but they're certainly not necessarily providing the best protection for consumers. That's why The Consumer Protection Act limits consumers' liability, as we know that these steps can occur very quickly, where the individual might not be aware that the credit card is stolen, or might not be aware that the credit card is missing, might not be aware that the

credit card has been fraudulently reproduced, and by the time they receive their statement, could be in for quite a shock if the perpetrator has had an opportunity to run up the credit on the credit card.

Vital Statistics has also taken steps to ensure that critical personal information is protected, and fines of up to \$50,000 may be imposed on anyone possessing or using fraudulent documents or using legitimate documents unlawfully. MPI is also taking steps to ensure personal information is protected with its new driver's licence, which the members opposite seem to take exception to. But it is part of your protection of your identity.

The federal bill and dual regulation that came into effect in January of '04 has applied to private-sector organizations in Manitoba that collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of a commercial activity.

So, there are a lot of things that are already happening here in Manitoba, a lot of things that are happening because they are covered under the federal acts, a lot of things that are happening because our Legislature recognizes the need to do more, and we've done more through consumer protection initiatives. So—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I'm very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act, put forward by the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

I think it's a bill that needs to be looked at by this government, supported by this government. I think the Member for Morris, in consultation and support from Brian Bowman, a renowned privacy lawyer, a lot of work has been done on this issue, and I think the bill reflects that. I think it's an excellent bill.

The bill will govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by organizations in the private sector. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when this personal information the organization has collected is lost, stolen and compromised.

The Member for Morris did indicate there have been a number of situations in the media over the last year or so, where there have been situations where organizations have had their information stolen, be it

through a computer, stolen out of a vehicle, information is taken off of BlackBerrys that have not only information for that individual but maybe the company that they represent.

So, I think, as the Member for Morris has indicated, this piece of legislation will actually address the gap that obviously is there within the private sector.

Madam Deputy Speaker, listening to the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), I believe that the Member for Gimli had some good comments, but I think that he spoke around the issue. The heart of the issue is that identity theft and ID fraud is personal information and if you provide for protection of this information, you prevent crime and you protect people. I think that this government should really look at this bill because that is exactly what I believe Manitobans have been looking for.

Seventy-three percent of Canadians believe that ID theft is a problem. So I believe that the Member for Morris, who has been working on this issue for well over four years, and first introduced this bill in 2005, was ahead of the game. I think she should be commended for identifying an issue and bringing it forward, and I believe that Manitoba has missed an opportunity by not legislating this four years ago when the Member for Morris first introduced this.

* (10:30)

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, they do have an opportunity, to support this bill and have Manitoba come in line with other provinces, such as Québec, British Columbia and Alberta, who have already developed legislation very similar in scope to Bill 219. There's nothing new. It would just bring Manitoba in line with other provinces that are being proactive on this issue, and I believe that the longer time passes before this bill is passed, the more difficult the problem of identity theft becomes to address.

Now, the Member for Gimli had mentioned that the government has brought in an identity theft bill, but that bill has done nothing to fight identity theft; in fact, it has made it easier for identity thieves to take over people's accounts. In that bill it should be noted that identity theft is not even mentioned. The word is not even mentioned in that bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I think the Member for Morris has identified a gap within identity theft, and I think this government needs to be looking at this

legislation as a serious piece of legislation that needs to be supported.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Centre reported some 10,000 complaints of identity theft and identity fraud, with losses totalling more than \$6 million in 2007 and more than a million in the first quarter of 2008. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is estimated that the number represents a very small percentage of the actual figures that are out there. People are identifying with the need for this type of legislation, and I think that, with what we're seeing being indicated out in the public, both in the media and within organizations like CAFCC, people are wanting to see this type of legislation that will be at the heart of personal protection.

Identity theft is a growing concern, and we've indicated that. Other provinces have legislated; we've indicated that. Even the Manitoba Federation of Labour has suggested that there is a gap in privacy laws. So, I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this issue and this legislation have a lot of merit. I think there's no reason not to pass this bill. It is well researched. It is vetted and endorsed by the privacy experts and is the only legislation currently under debate that addresses privacy. So I think it's a made-in-Manitoba solution to how personal information is collected, used and disclosed, and I think that the members in this House have an opportunity to support something which I think is very important for Manitobans.

The Member for Gimli also mentioned MPI and the enhanced driver's licence, and his comment was that MPI's strategy on enhanced driver's licence is actually a part of the protection of one's identity. I have a concern with the process that is being followed by MPI with regard to the enhanced driver's licences or the enhanced identification.

I had the opportunity to be in one of the centres that were collecting personal information for this specific identification tool, and I was very concerned that the information that people were being asked to share could be overheard and actually, you know, taken from a conversation that you could have with an individual who was working for MPI and gathering this information to create one's enhanced driver's licence. There were people, sitting less than five, 10 feet away from an individual who was being interviewed, who were waiting to go through the process. The individuals that were also going through the process of sharing their personal information were less than three to five feet away

from each other, and it was very concerning that there just seemed to be a lack of privacy when you were actually sharing your own personal information in this process.

So I believe that is a factor in the decision of individuals to not embrace the enhanced driver's licence or the enhanced identification process, because I believe that people have a lot of questions about how their personal information is being handled through this process. I believe that passports are what most people are considering to be the safest form of identification when travelling.

In closing, I just want to say that I believe that the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) has created a made-in-Manitoba law that should be passed, and I believe that we need to support this. As she said, once personal information or privacy is lost, you can't get it back.

So I applaud the Member for Morris for creating Bill 219, and I look forward to it becoming law in the near future. Thank you.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to put a few comments on the record with regard to Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act.

We certainly don't look at this in a way that in any way detracts from the sincerity of the Member for Morris putting this forward. We believe that what she is putting forward she is doing so in a very honourable way, but we feel that many of the items that are being addressed in Bill 219 miss the mark because Bill 219 is missing an important element.

For example, an independent and effective oversight to redress a mechanism with powers to investigate, for example, is just one that is missing. One of the elements of personal information protection legislation that the federal Cabinet consider in determining whether provincial legislation is substantially similar is this particular point.

In other words, provincially regulated private sector organizations in Manitoba would be regulated by both acts, dual regulation. The bill lacks oversight in redress mechanisms. That very fact alone is likely enough to ensure that the bill is, in fact, not substantially similar to other federal legislation.

We all know that identity theft certainly is an issue. There's been a lot said on the media, whether it

be in print or electronic media, about identity theft. There are many ads running. Many of us have seen the ad on TV where people put their bank statements, for example, in the garbage and then you see someone bending down to tie up their shoe, but they're going through people's garbage to get their bank statements to try to get information on people.

It certainly is a serious issue, and many who have encountered identity theft certainly can attest to that. The loss of dollars, not only to our banking institutions but to private individuals certainly attest to that.

I just want to make a couple of further comments with regard to our own government, and certainly the Minister of Finance of Manitoba (Mr. Selinger) wrote to the federal Minister of Industry, urging him to consider amending the PIPEDA to require notification of individuals when their personal information has been lost, stolen or improperly accessed.

We believe, and most people believe, a harmonized approach to address identity theft is the best approach to ensure that the Canadian consumers are protected regardless of location of their businesses in Canada. So what is Manitoba doing with regard to addressing identity theft? The Personal Investigations Amendment Act brought in by our Minister of Finance gives people who are concerned that their identity is being used by someone else the ability to place a security alert on their credit card, or credit report, I should say. The regulations are being developed.

There is an ID theft prevention Web site, set up by the Manitoba government in 2006, I believe. The ID theft Web site includes access to an ID theft prevention kit, an ID check list, contact information from a variety of organizations and resources. Through this Web site Manitobans are encouraged to be cautious about giving out personal information and to give it out only if it's imperative, but businesses are also reminded that they are responsible to protect consumers' personal information under PIPEDA.

*(10:40)

The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) mentioned prior about people always being—on a number of occasions being asked to prove who they are. Whether they're applying for a credit card or applying to purchase goods, they're often asked to use their social

insurance number or to provide some kind of ID and, in many cases, it's more than one piece of ID. So they were asked to be very, very careful with this. We've all heard stories where people have had their credit cards double swiped and then they find that the monies have been taken out of their bank account only when they receive their statement or when they check their statements on-line, they discover that they've been ripped off.

There are a number of things, as I mentioned, that we are doing. Some other measures that have been taken in recent past to combat ID theft include an Identity Theft Kit for Business which was developed, which suggests steps that businesses can take to prevent ID theft. It's a valuable tool for businesses and as I understand it, the feedback has been fairly positive.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Consumer Measures Committee's Identity Theft working group is a subcommittee of the Consumer Measures Committee, federal-provincial-territorial committee of Consumer Affairs. Officials working under the minister's directions recommended amendments to the Criminal Code. It also recommended changes regarding notification of security breaches, which is being looked at in the federal legislation as I mentioned before. The working group on credit card report harmonization has considered the issue of security so as to try to harmonize the approach that we're all taking and what legislation currently protects Manitoba consumers against identity theft, fraud and impersonation on matters that fall under the Criminal Code.

In November '07, I believe it was in November, the honourable Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice and Attorney General declared that his government continued to be committed to cracking down on identity theft in organized crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, provincial legislation under The Consumer Protection Act limits consumers' liability to \$50 when a credit card is lost or stolen, where the credit information is used to make fraudulent purchases. We've heard many examples like this and it's important to have such legislation in place.

Vital Statistics is also taking steps to ensure that critical personal information is protected and fines up to \$50,000 may be imposed on anyone processing or using fraudulent documents or using legitimate documents unlawfully.

I have to say that a lot of our financial institutions have been very good about working with consumers that have been ripped off in one way or another with regard to use of their credit cards. Financial institutions are pretty good about this because they understand that there was, unknowing to the person who owns the card, different purchases made and sometimes of quite a large sum.

Now with technology that's available these days, you hear many stories of people going on eBay or trying other ways to purchase goods on-line and they are not receiving what they think they are purchasing. So there are many aspects to people who have used people's ID to fraudulently—it's theft, for a lack of a better word and it's treated so.

So what do consumers do if they become victims of identity theft? Well, consumers who are victims of identity theft should contact their local law enforcement to report the crime, cancel your cards and accounts that may have been affected and contact credit reporting agencies like TransUnion or Equifax. It's important because usually they're not the only one. I know I only have a short time remaining, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it's important that people do this because if they've been ripped off or their identity has been taken, you can count that others may be in the same situation and may help prevent this from happening to someone else.

In conclusion, I just want to say that it's important as a consumer, you also have a responsibility to take care of your information and be very protective of what you do with your bank statements and also your ID. Be very cautious that someone may want to make use of your credit cards and your information to use it in a fraudulent way.

So again, I'm sorry, but Bill 219, it just doesn't hit the mark and yet the sincerity of the Member for Morris is not certainly taken into question with regard to this item. But there are, as we pointed out, some things that are really lacking with it and other things that we have done as a province to address identity theft, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, with that, I just want to conclude that, as a government, as I've pointed out, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has been in consultation with his federal counterparts and certainly trying to make sure that what we're doing across the country is in harmony with what other initiatives that have been taken.

So I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to put a couple of comments on the record, and I know that others wish to do so, as well.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to support Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act, as put forward by my colleague from Morris. This bill, I believe, has been well researched and I find it difficult to believe that the NDP government continue to ignore such an important piece of legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I've heard the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), today, both talking about identity theft and how it is on the rise and that it should be addressed and, yet, after four years, they haven't been able to bring forward any legislation that would address this in any particularly important way. I would suggest that this piece of legislation would really fit the bill going forward to protect all of Manitobans in a way that the rest of Canada and Canadians are protected.

The bill governs the collection and the use and the disclosure of personal information by organizations in the private sector. This is something that's really lacking in Manitoba. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when personal information the organization has collected is lost, stolen or compromised. That's really the nuts and bolts of this particular piece of legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's been missing in Manitoba for many years. As you know, with the rise on identity theft through credit cards and phones and other scams, it's been taking a toll on many people's life savings and it should be addressed in a positive way.

I would also suggest that as we look at some of the legislation that has been brought forward while this particular legislation has been ignored, we brought forward, or the NDP government brought forward a bill, last year, to introduce the enhanced ID cards and the enhanced driver's licence cards. These were initially brought forward and, I might add, with the support of this side of the House, that this, here, could be used as an alternate for passports for crossing the border for many people that don't fly, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the same time, we all knew what the deadlines were for this type of information and this type of a card to be available to the citizens of Manitoba, and we, at that time, expressed our concerns of the privacy issue that

would surround the production of these cards and the use of these cards going forward.

As you can see, and I'm sure that you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that today we still have none of these cards are available at this particular time. However, there has been a very slow uptake. I would suggest that there's been a lot of controversy surrounding the storage of the privacy part of these cards, as we have heard from the federal Privacy Commissioner. I would suggest that they had a big concern about this and where the information would be stored. They didn't want the information stored in the United States. However, apparently, that's where it will be stored.

* (10:50)

The Ombudsman in the Province of Manitoba also had a big issue or a big concern about this, made that concern known to our provincial government and, at that time, was ignored and is still being ignored by the minister responsible, along with a number of his colleagues. I would suggest that had they paid more attention to this, and had they been able to bring the cards on budget and on time, which has been a problem for many of their projects going forward, they might have had a better uptake. But at this present time, I would suggest that the cards are costing Manitobans about \$6,500 a card at the rate of the uptake today, which is a huge amount of money that has been wasted.

We have seen, in other provinces, where they had come and had started to develop these types of cards, where they've actually backed away from them. Our sister province to the west, the province of Saskatchewan, had spent a considerable amount of money as well on these identity cards to facilitate their residents to cross the borders and, after about a \$400,000 initial investment, they understood that this was not the type of program that was beneficial to their people, and was certainly something that would cost their people, their identity and their privacy, and protection would not be there. So they scrapped that program.

I find it difficult to understand, today, why this government is being irresponsible when it comes to the ID cards going forward. They continue to flog these cards going forward at a huge, huge cost when we are in a—supposedly in a recession. Only a couple of months ago they said we would be immune to it in Manitoba; however, we have some difficulty

balancing the budget. We can't afford to pay any debt or debt payments. I can probably find them \$13 million to help put towards debt payment going forward, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would suggest that the federal government can protect people or do protect people. If their personal information is breached, you're notified immediately and there is a certain amount of protection and damage control that can be done. In Manitoba we do not have a privacy commissioner. We have no representative that we could go to, that we could look to for advice if we do encounter a lost card, for example, and people do lose things. Periodically, they'll lose their purse or they'll have their car broken into—Manitoba, of course, at one time, was a capital of car theft—your identity, many times, is in your vehicle and so they become the property of people who would probably engage in some other criminal activity, and you have no privacy commissioner here that would help defend you. A privacy commissioner also looks at legislation that would be coming forward to protect the individual Manitobans, and we don't see that happening either with this government.

I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that after the Ombudsman has made certain recommendations, especially—and I'm probably going to dwell a little bit more on this ID card. They made a specific recommendation, and said an individual would be much further ahead if they went and got a passport. I can give you a bit of a personal history on that. It takes one hour, one hour from the Legislative Building over, get your picture taken, sign, get your passport and be back here in one hour, at \$85, versus a \$6,500 bill per card that, so far, has been issued under the enhanced ID cards.

So I would suggest, then, that a responsible government would look at the protection and the security of personal information, and that should be a given mandate for any government to do that. This bill, here, is a perfect bill to do that. If there is a problem with this bill or if they have some issues with this bill—as the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) said, it was a great bill, but it just needed to be tweaked a little—I would suggest that that minister, or that particular member, bring an amendment forward. We would be more than happy to look at that, and deal with that as we go forward.

I see that my time is coming to a close, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in

support of this bill, and I would suggest that the House opposite, that they would support this and pass it. It's high time that it's been done. Thank you very much.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's a privilege to put a few comments on the record in regard to the MLA for Morris's Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act.

I do want to comment in regard to the passion that the member has shown around the whole issue of protection and identity theft. She has brought this bill forward, as she has said, for many years now and, unfortunately, Madam Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House still have some similar concerns in regard to this piece of legislation that we did have initially from when it was introduced.

One of the first concerns that we have in regard to the legislation is the whole issue around dual regulation. As many of my colleagues have mentioned this morning in the House one of the concerns that we have is Bill 219 is missing an important element because it does—there is a federal piece of legislation that is—and this bill is substantially similar to that and this is a problem for employers here in Manitoba because it would regulate the private sector organizations in Manitoba to be regulated by two pieces of legislation. They would be regulated by the federal legislation and they would be regulated, as well, by the legislation here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Deputy Speaker, this would be a problem. The MLA for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) is saying I'm wrong, I'm wrong, and I think it's important—I've talked many times in this House about consultation with stakeholders, and I think that it's not necessarily up to me to convince the member opposite that her legislation is a problem.

She did talk about the fact that we should take this piece of legislation and we should move it to committee, that she would really like to see this bill be passed to committee because she would really like the public to come forward and stakeholders to come forward and speak to the legislation. I think it's important that some of that consultation be done ahead of time and I'm wondering if she has had an

opportunity to speak with any of the stakeholders here in Manitoba that represents employees.

I think that would be important because I think that they are the individuals that would be concerned about this kind of legislation and they would also be concerned about this kind of protection. I think that it would be important to hear from the employer stakeholders as well as the employees in regard to this whole issue of having two pieces of legislation that they would have to comply with.

We have a similar situation here in Manitoba particularly in my department where we have shared jurisdiction for Immigration and we've been able to resolve those issues because of the shared jurisdiction nature of Immigration with a bilateral agreement with the federal government.

I don't know if she's had an opportunity to speak with the federal government about the dual regulation nature of this legislation. I know it's difficult when you have, over the last four years when she has introduced this legislation, every year there's been a couple of different governments but the problem still exists that it's very difficult for stakeholders to comply if they have to face dual regulation. So our approach has been quite different, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member opposite thinks that this is a made-in-Manitoba solution—

* (11:00)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The minister will have five minutes when this matter is again before the House.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, on House business.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Lack of a Policy for Manitoba Persons with Disabilities sponsored by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is to advise that the private member's resolution for next Thursday will be Lack of a Policy for Manitoba Persons with Disabilities sponsored by the Member for Pembina.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Public Housing

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., the House will move to the consideration of private member's resolutions.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), that

WHEREAS affordable housing is a basic human and social right of every individual; and

WHEREAS homelessness is a major social issue with reverberations on physical and mental health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, WHHI, is a joint effort between the provincial government, the federal government and the City of Winnipeg to address homelessness, declining housing stock and the revitalization of Winnipeg's older neighbourhoods; and

WHEREAS since 2000, over \$113 million has been committed through partnerships like the WHHI to rehabilitate, repair, construct over 6,600 housing units as well as assist those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; and

WHEREAS since April 2007, our government has announced investments of more than \$200 million toward a new four-pillar, multi-year, low-income housing strategy which will enable community-driven construction or renovation of affordable homes for low-income Manitobans, while other new investments will enhance public housing, homeless shelters and basic home repairs; and

WHEREAS the first pillar of this new strategy, HOMEWorks!, provides a \$104.5 million, three-year funding targeting affordable homes for low-income Manitobans, including refugees and immigrants, off-reserve Aboriginal and northern Manitobans; and

WHEREAS HOMEWorks! allocates a minimum of \$42 million to Een Dah Aung, Our Home, a program for Aboriginal off-reserve housing and \$6 million to extend neighbourhood housing assistance for three years to support community-driven revitalization efforts in the designated neighbourhoods under the Neighbourhoods Alive! program; and

WHEREAS in 2008 Throne Speech a commitment was made under the

BUILDING Foundations pillar of the low-income housing strategy to invest \$160 million in new housing in Thompson, Brandon and The Pas and to invest in upgrades to homes in Gilbert Park, Central Park, Lord Selkirk Park and Brandon Tenant Park, including water and energy efficiency upgrades that will be done in concert with community organizations; and

WHEREAS provincial and territorial and federal senior housing officials have developed a long-term federal housing funding plan for existing public housing as a top priority; and

WHEREAS despite the efforts of the provincial government, there is still clearly a great need for more affordable housing for low-income Manitobans; and

WHEREAS with budget 2009, the provincial government recognizes the importance of infrastructure spending as an economic stimulus, with \$387 million to be spent on social and affordable housing.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the efforts of the provincial government in continuing to construct supportive and affordable housing across the province and in revitalizing the existing units in order to help meet the demand for affordable housing for low-income Manitobans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to work with other provinces to strongly encourage the federal government to increase funding levels to address the urgent need for new affordable housing throughout the country.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there leave of the House to have the resolution considered as printed? *[Agreed]*

It has been moved by the honourable Member for Transcona and seconded by the MLA for Fort Rouge—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS affordable housing is a basic human and social right of every individual; and

WHEREAS homelessness is a major social issue with reverberations on physical and mental health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI) is a joint effort between the provincial government, the federal government and the City of Winnipeg to address homelessness, declining housing stock and the revitalization of Winnipeg's older neighbourhoods; and

WHEREAS since 2000, over \$113 million has been committed through partnerships like the WHHI to repair, rehabilitate, or construct over 6,600 housing units as well as assist those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; and

WHEREAS since April 2007, our government has announced investments of more than \$200 million toward a new four-pillar, multi-year, low-income housing strategy which will enable community-driven construction or renovation of affordable homes for low-income Manitobans, while other new investments will enhance public housing, homeless shelters and basic home repairs; and

WHEREAS the first pillar of this new strategy, HOMEWorks!, provides a \$104.5-million, three-year fund targeting affordable homes for low-income Manitobans, including refugees and immigrants, off-reserve Aboriginal and northern Manitobans; and

WHEREAS HOMEWorks! allocates a minimum of \$42 million to Een Dah Aung (Our Home) a program for Aboriginal off-reserve housing, and \$6 million to extend neighbourhood housing assistance for three years to support community-driven revitalization efforts in the designated neighbourhoods under the Neighbourhoods Alive! program; and

WHEREAS in the 2008 Throne Speech a commitment was made under the BUILDINGFoundations pillar of the low-income housing strategy to invest \$160 million in new housing in Thompson, Brandon and The Pas, and to invest in upgrades to homes in Gilbert Park, Central Park, Lord Selkirk Park and Brandon Tenant Park, including water and energy efficiency upgrades that will be done in concert with community organizations; and

WHEREAS provincial, territorial and federal senior housing officials develop a long-term federal housing funding plan for existing public housing as a top priority; and

WHEREAS despite the efforts of the provincial government, there is still clearly a great need for more affordable housing for lower-income Manitobans; and

WHEREAS with budget 2009, the provincial government recognizes the importance of infrastructure spending as an economic stimulus, with \$387 million to be spent on social and affordable housing.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the efforts of the provincial government in continuing to construct supportive and affordable housing across the province and in revitalizing the existing units in order to help meet the demand for affordable housing for low-income Manitobans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to work with other provinces to strongly urge the federal government to increase funding levels to address the urgent need for new affordable housing throughout the country.

Mr. Reid: It's my pleasure to rise to add comment to this resolution which I am very honoured to sponsor. I thank my colleague the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) for agreeing to second this private member's resolution here today.

I know this resolution is important to, not only her community, but to many of the communities of members of this Chamber. I look around this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I look at members of this House. I daresay that every one of us lives in what we would consider to be adequate and affordable housing, but, unfortunately, that is not the case in many of our communities of this province, including my own. That is, in part, the reason why I'm proud to sponsor this private member's resolution today.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In the last few weeks our society and our communities across not only the province of Manitoba, but across our country, have been focussed on the homelessness issue in our country and in our province due in large part to the heroic deeds of Mr. Faron Hall, the individual who rescued the young man from the flood waters of the Red River just recently. Mr. Hall was unfortunately a homeless individual, and yet, despite the conditions under which he finds himself living, he saw in his heart to rescue this young man, and, of course, it brought into focus for all Manitobans, and, indeed, I say all Canadians, the plight of the homeless in our province and in our country.

Looking back to what has happened with respect to the housing initiatives in our country, we had some time ago, in Canada, we had a national housing strategy that would provide financial support to the various provinces and territories of Canada to allow them to upgrade and to rejuvenate and to build new housing for low-income folks, not only in the province of Manitoba, but across the country. Of course, at that time during the 1990s, the previous Liberal government decided that they were going to get out of the housing program in Canada, and I think that was an unfortunate move on the part of the federal government of the day.

Now, most folks will think that Canada is a very wealthy country, and that we do not have a housing or a homelessness issue to deal with in this country, but having travelled across the province of Manitoba, I have seen many communities that have homeless people, and we need to take the steps.

Canada is the only industrialized country—the only country in the industrialized world that is without a national housing strategy, and I think that is very, very unfortunate considering the great wealth of our nation. Of course, Manitoba, being a part of Canada, and Manitoba doing relatively well right now even despite the other economic circumstances happening in provinces to the east and west of us, Manitoba is doing relatively well financially speaking.

I do know, because this is not the first time that I have raised this private member's resolution in this Chamber, I do know there were comments that were brought forward the last time this matter was debated in this House and members saying that we shouldn't be poking at the federal government. So I want to start off by saying that I recognize that, as a result of the recent federal government budget, there was a modest amount, and I say modest amount, of investment that was made into housing for the various provinces and territories. I know our provincial government, while we are happy to receive that level of financial support, we also recognize that there is much, much more work and investment that the federal government could be doing by way of a partner, a full partner, in dealing with the homelessness issue that we have facing us in this country.

* (11:10)

Now, the basic tenets of any civilized society, of course, are food, shelter, and clothing, and that is, in part, some of the services that are missing for those

that are living in poverty and those that are living without shelter in this province and in this country.

A wise man once stated, and I think it was the greatest Canadian that said that you do not measure a country or a territory by the size of its gold reserve, but you measure the country or territory by how it treats its least fortunate citizens. I think those are the steps that we have to take in this province to recognize that we have a responsibility to deal with the housing homelessness issue that we have facing us in this province.

Now, if you look to our neighbours to the south of us who often like to measure the wealth of their nation by the size of their gold reserves, as the greatest Canadian once pointed out, and we see the financial dilemma facing the country, our neighbour to the south—and I don't say this with any glee because I don't wish this on any nation of the world—as a result of the greed that has occurred in that country, the immoral and the unethical lending practices that were put in practice by various financial institutions in our neighbour to the south that has forced many of the families of that country out of their homes and, of course, will put them into poverty situations.

I think that is a very unfortunate circumstance, and I do hope they get that matter under control because it is obviously causing untold sorrow for many families in the United States, and, of course, has spilled over into many other nations of the world that now have to deal with the economic fallout as a result of those unethical and immoral lending practices.

Manitoba, as I said, and Canada indeed are both a wealthy province and a wealthy country relatively speaking, and I know that, despite that, we still have homelessness occurring in our province here. I've witnessed it across the country, and I'll speak first about the province of Manitoba.

Last year, I had the honour of joining with several of my colleagues as we took an opportunity to visit Siloam Mission here in the city of Winnipeg, and, having known of Siloam and the great work that they do for many years, I thought it was a good opportunity to see first-hand the services and the work that they perform on behalf of some of our most least fortunate citizens that we have living in the city of Winnipeg here.

I was very impressed by the level of services that Siloam provided to the homeless people living in

Winnipeg, and, of course, they not only provide food, shelter and clothing, but they also provide medical care as well and attend to any of the other needs the homeless folks will have. Considering our climate and the variations of it, this is a very needed service, and I know Siloam will continue to provide that level of service.

It is not the only organization in our province that provides that type of care. There are many others, including Salvation Army and others in our city and our province. I also had the opportunity in past years to travel to different parts of Canada, and I have seen homeless people, people living in abject poverty, living in other parts of Canada. In particular, the city of Vancouver has a very large homeless population. They have many social problems that they have to deal with there with respect to finding adequate housing for people living in a variety of states of health and living in homeless circumstances.

I know that, as a result of a recent survey I have undertaken in my own community, to narrow the focus a little bit, I undertook a survey of my own community to find out what folks in my community were thinking with respect to housing, and the folks of my community responded that they wanted to see our provincial government make significant more investments into affordable supportive housing not only for seniors but for folks that were living with disabilities as well, and that was the focus of my community.

Now, everyone knows that if you move forward with building more affordable housing, it will be an economic stimulus to the province of Manitoba, and I think that is something that is a wise investment with respect to how we conduct ourselves.

I know, during the 1990s, I had the opportunity to canvass through parts of my community, and we have larger public housing units and we have individual public housing units. I must say that, at that time, I was deeply distressed by the deplorable state of disrepair that some of these housing units were let to languish in. It was distressing to the families that were forced to live in those conditions. Windows were broken, there was mould in the homes, it was mice infested, the siding on the outside of the house was falling off and the roofs were leaking, and yet the government of the day chose not to make the investment into public housing that I think is so crucial.

We need a long-term vision with respect to homelessness in our province of Manitoba, and I know our government has taken the first steps towards that. I'm quite optimistic and hopeful that in the near future, we will have more announcements to make with respect to dealing with housing for our least fortunate citizens and that we will take steps to also not only build new structures, but also to revitalize and to renew. Considering that we are—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I am pleased to be able to put some words on the record with regard to the Member for Transcona's resolution on public housing.

This is an issue that is needing this government's attention, so I'm pleased that they'd want to bring it in a resolution, but I'm looking for action from this government to address the so many needs that are out there with regard to public housing.

Forty percent of the provincial budget comes from the federal government and I think that speaks to a bigger issue than what this government is willing to address. It speaks to the dollars that are there. What we need to see is this government show some leadership and show some direction in providing those dollars to the communities, to the individuals who actually are looking for safe and affordable housing in this province.

No one on this side of the House is disputing the need for more affordable housing for Manitobans. We believe that investing in social housing is not simply a charitable venture, but also a driver in today's economy. I believe that—from the conversations I've had with individuals in my own home communities within my constituency and also with other Manitobans throughout the province who have shared their concerns and actually have invited me into their homes and shown me how poorly their homes are being—deteriorating and how this government is really not paying attention to their needs.

Low-income renters who are dealing with mice, with mould, with bedbugs, with ants and a host of other problems such as rooms that don't come together and through the winter—and we've had a very cold winter—seeing conditions affecting a young person who's 16 years old living in a room that's been an add-on to a house with the walls not joining and obviously creating major discomfort for this

young person. Madam Acting Speaker, it's disheartening when you visit these homes and visit these individuals and you see the pain in their faces when they know that they are not providing a place to live that is safe and warm for their children.

I believe that we've asked the government to look at these types of situations and we continually see that press releases come out with really no action on the part of government, especially in the area of public housing. I raised the issue in September with regard to Duck Bay and Waterhen and the situation I just spoke of is true and based on a family that is leaving in Waterhen who not only have mould in their washrooms, they have mould on their ceilings, the insulation is coming down from their ceiling because of the damp moisture coming in through the roofs.

* (11:20)

Their 16-year-old son is living in an addition to the house with no real insulation or supports available to him. I believe that this spring, the roof is pretty much caved in and this young man is living in that room still. The conditions are heartbreaking when his bedding is cold and damp and he is struggling to continue to go to school and to learn when I think that it's so depressing when he has to come home and have to deal with things that he shouldn't have to deal with, Madam Acting Speaker. Again, we raised this issue in September with the minister, and these people still are not seeing their homes, which are obviously needed and need some attention from this government.

Again, it seems to be in a bureaucratic red tape situation where I think that, if this Minister of Housing really cared about the situation, he would have intervened and make sure that those files were dealt with. Whatever the circumstances behind the inaction of providing homes for these people, they deserve better than what they get.

I raised a situation last week or the week before with regard to Caroline O'Toole from Souris who lives in public housing. A Hydro bill through the winter was \$560; that was more than what her rent was, Madam Acting Speaker. How can an individual afford that as a single parent of two children and deal with deplorable conditions in her home? She has no heat in her bedroom. She had ice on the inside of her window in her bedroom. When you went outside and looked at the window of the house, you could shimmy the window. You touch the wall and actually it sponged in and out.

These are deplorable conditions, and what is extremely disappointing and discouraging is that this individual alerted Housing a year and half ago when she was moving in that these things were just not acceptable. She didn't know how she could bring her family into a home like that and was told, she was promised by this government, that they would fix those things before she moved in. It didn't happen.

Old appliances were in her basement. She had probably five or six pieces of appliances in her basement, and this is an area where she wants her children to bring friends and to spend time with her children. I think that it's unfortunate when this government ignored her request and her needs. I think a big part of the interest of Ms. O'Toole in wanting to live in the public housing on Evans Street in Souris was because it integrated with the whole community. Her children were on a street that people wouldn't generally know that she was a mom who was on financial assistance or looking for public housing support. She was in a community, on a street which everybody is equal. I think that living in a house, she saw the opportunity to have extra space for her children to have friends come over and the extra space to be able to spend time with her kids and have a recreational area in their home. But based on what the government failed to do for her, that was not corrected until we had to raise it in the House, Madam Acting Speaker.

It was interesting, because she called me right after question period, either that day or the next and said, thank you for raising this issue; I tried really hard to get the attention of government, and they just failed to listen to my needs.

I know there's another woman on the same street who's in public housing and has the same problems, same challenges; had trouble paying her Hydro bill and, again, has three daughters who want to do Ukrainian dance and want to be involved in different sports, like baseball, et cetera, and doesn't let on to her children that the financial ramifications of trying to live in that house on Evans Street is really dragging her down.

I think that we really have to pay attention to the needs of Manitobans. I think that this government has failed so many families in this way. I find it interesting that they'll bring a resolution like this forward and speak of the wonderful things that they say they're doing, when really, more and more Manitobans are letting us know that it's all words.

People see press releases that go out and talk about off-reserve housing opportunities and funding that is going to communities or that is targeted for communities. I think Duck Bay and Waterhen are a symbolic example of, really, this government missing the boat and, again, not responding to the needs of Manitobans but are more interested in the press release and blaming the federal government, which I had said earlier provides 40 percent of the provincial budget. If this government really felt it was a priority, then they would have been able to address these issues.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, I applaud the member for bringing this resolution forward. I have some very, very serious concerns about this government's commitment to public housing. If they are really committed to this, I would love to see change happen. I would love to see families like the O'Toole's and like the families in Waterhen and Duck Bay, who actually see action, not only press releases, but actually be accountable to those dollars and actually make Manitobans see that they really do care about this initiative. Thank you.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): First of all, I want to thank the Member for Transcona, whose private member's resolution on public housing was introduced today. This resolution calls on the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to support the Province in its ongoing initiative at creating supportive and affordable housing across the province that would involve both new structures and revitalizing older structures.

As well, this resolution urges the provincial government to work with—it urges the federal government, rather, to work with this Province and other provinces in increasing the funding levels to address the major and urgent need for new affordable housing across this nation.

Madam Acting Speaker, decent housing is very important. Affordable housing is a basic and human right for every individual. Having that decent housing is central. It's central to the way we live. It's central to our quality of life. It's central to our health, so it stands at the very centre of so many important things.

I'm still reminded of the fact that, after the 1999 election, one of the first things that the northern MLAs did was call a meeting in The Pas. We got together at this meeting to try and isolate the various threads or factors that we needed to look at in northern Manitoba, particularly look at more

carefully than had been done before by the previous government. So we were looking for motifs, threads and themes, recurrent themes, that kept being repeated everywhere in our constituencies. Actually, four of them kept recurring: housing, health, transportation, economic development and education. Those were the five recurring themes, but if we prioritized them, the No. 1 theme always was housing. So that was the biggest issue that we faced as northern MLAs. It was a No. 1 issue.

Why is that so? That is so because so many northerners live in substandard housing. They live in houses that are crowded. Where there's lack of sanitation. Where there may be, perhaps, no running water, where the water may be trucked in and then pumped into the house into a large barrel. There is always an issue with mould, because there is an awful lot of moisture in the house, possibly because of the overcrowding and lack of proper ventilation, whatever. But that's the recurring theme with regard to substandard housing in northern Manitoba.

That is the case in northern communities, in Northern Affairs communities and in Aboriginal reserve communities, as well. It's everywhere. More accentuated, perhaps, in some of the Northern Affairs communities and on the reserves.

It's a serious issue. I've tried to take it very seriously, Madam Acting Speaker. I remember that in the early 1990s, well, the mid-1990s, I travelled to South Indian Lake with the then-federal critic, MP Libby Davies, to take a look at the housing in South Indian Lake. We came back with a whole list of horror stories. I remember, not a long time after that, several years, perhaps, I went to Tadoule Lake on another housing tour, if you like. The *Free Press* was along and, again, we saw horror stories regarding overcrowding, lack of maintenance, sanitation, and so on, and, again the ever-present mould and the health hazard that it actually poses.

* (11:30)

Two years ago I travelled north, once again, on a housing tour with Jack Layton, our federal leader, along with Niki Ashton, the MP for Churchill who, by the way, is a wonderful young, energetic and capable person, and I really enjoy working together with her. She is certainly a bright light for northern Manitoba. But here we were in Pukatawagan, and the first house we were invited into was a house that actually housed 24 people, 24 people that slept in shifts. There were three or four babies in the living room. One of the noticeable things about the house

was that it was steamy, obviously, because the washers were running 24 hours a day—or the washer. In fact, the lady told me that they wore out a washer and a dryer once a year. So I understand where the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) is coming from when she talks about Duck Bay and Waterhen and other places, because I see those same things in northern communities such as Pukatawagan.

It's dangerous when these young people, well, any people who live in conditions that are obviously not healthy: overcrowding and mould. We have tried to address this, but it is an extremely complex phenomenon, extremely complex issue.

I would, however, not want to leave the impression that all is doom and gloom. I did have the privilege of visiting South Indian Lake again. Well, I visit it regularly, but, again, in terms of housing, a year or so ago with Oscar Lathlin who, I suppose, was then the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. He was, who is since deceased, may he rest in peace. We visited a sawmill, a sawmill that was put into place by, I suppose, some of the funding from ANA, as well as a volunteer organization called Frontiers Foundation. It was a wonderful organization and they had managed, together with ANA, to put this sawmill in to South Indian Lake. A number of young men were operating the sawmill; they were being trained. It was an extremely efficient sawmill, by the way, too. I think there was only a 3 percent loss in terms of sawdust.

These young people were using the lumber to build homes, and it was more than just building homes. They were also taught sawmilling, harvesting, chain saw usage, log cabin construction, timber frame construction, and so on, and so on. The chief, who happens to be Chris Baker, and one of his councillors, Mike Dumas, told me how the pride in that community had simply just blossomed because young men that might have been less than caring about their community's appearance were now very much caring about their community's appearance now that they owned a home. These weren't just traditional homes either, although I did see one traditional home made out of really solid square blocks of lumber that they cut. I think the program was called Standing Tree to Standing House.

Anyway, these traditional homes were solid, indestructible and they would last for a long time. The beautiful part about it, I thought, was that they had used recycling. They had gone to the former mill at Leaf Rapids, the Rattan Mine, and mill, where

there were quite a number of cedar posts left. The cedar, I presume, they were either telephone poles or electricity poles, but they're made out of cedar and they had been given these because they're being recycled anyway, or thrown away or burnt. They had sliced them up and used them as siding on the homes that they were themselves constructing. So a young man would go out in the bush with training, cut the logs, help saw the logs, help build the house and then put the cedar veneer on the outside, really beautifully done, all done with a minimal amount of money, pulling yourselves up by your bootstraps. It was just a wonderful thing to see, particularly if I compare that to that earlier visit I had with Libby Davies many years ago, when it was all gloom and doom. So I want to thank Chris Baker, the Chief, and also Mike Dumas.

Now, Frontiers Foundation is a volunteer organization, and it so happened again, coincidentally, that April 8, which is not that long ago, Frontiers Foundation had a caucus presentation. I got to meet the founder of Frontiers Foundation, the Reverend Catto, who is, I believe, a United Church minister, who started this foundation in Africa in Rhodesia in 1968 together with his wife. They're very active in eastern Canada and also starting to become somewhat active in northern Manitoba.

Also on this organization is Nora Ross, who is on the Manitoba advisory committee, who was a person I've known for many years. She lives in Thompson; I worked with her in the early '70s at Frontier Collegiate Institute in Cranberry Portage. She is a 43-year veteran of working with this particular group, Frontiers Foundation. So I thank her, as well, for the hard work she is doing, in working as a partner with Aboriginal people and other northerners to create their own housing.

Now, northern housing is a complex issue. There are many bits and pieces to it. We have to look at not just money, as other members have pointed out. It's not just the matter of throwing money at it, although we certainly are putting large chunks of money into it. We have to look at, perhaps, out of the box, as the expression is. We're going to have to look at training people to build log homes. We may have to look at other forms of construction, such as stack log building, bale construction, interchangeable panel buildings. I know we did build a prototype northern house in Thompson. It just was a wonderful house, except northerners didn't seem to like it. So, obviously, we missed something there. But we can, I think, build those kinds of houses where they're

panelized. I think that's, perhaps, not the correct term, but interchangeable parts so we can build many of them.

But we have to, above all, though, be clear of northern reality, which is that we must be aware that the climate is colder, so we need better insulation, we need better construction. As one of the earlier members pointed out, I think the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), some of those structures are really shoddy, and they shouldn't be built shoddy in a climate that is extremely frigid in the winter. So we need better construction, better insulation and I think better air exchange ventilation systems. A lot of our young people suffer with asthma and problems, and I think they may well be related to the mould and other stuff that happens in homes that are not properly ventilated.

Maintenance is a huge issue. I don't know how many times I've been stopped when I knock on doors, let's say in Brochet, and some lady says, do you know anything about fixing a hot water heater. Well I don't, I usually get electrocuted in the process; I try to help. But, you know, we simply can't get an electrician or a plumber. Maintenance is a huge issue. So you can have a relatively good house, but how do you maintain it at the proper level if you can't get experts to come in. It's an issue that faces us all the time, and I don't have an easy answer for it, although we're trying hard to train people to do those kinds of things.

Madam Acting Speaker, I could talk about many more things but I'm running out of time, so I'll let my other colleagues speak—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I did have the opportunity but, unfortunately, I ran out of time the other day to talk about housing. It is a very important issue I believe to all members of the Chamber as we try to deal with this issue in different ways.

I was listening to the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), and I guess he's making reference to the last BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, where he makes reference to the federal government. In his comments he talked about the federal Liberals not supporting non-profit housing or the need to have more money and where were the federal Liberals or cancelling the program.

What the Member for Transcona should be aware of is—he'll recall the Charlottetown Accord,

which came from the failure of the Meech Lake Accord—a part of the accord clearly indicated an offloading of responsibilities. One of those was housing. The Charlottetown Accord was wanting to have the provinces take complete control over housing.

I say that because there is only a handful, and a handful is probably exaggerating, it might have only been two or three MLAs that I'm aware of—Sharon Carstairs was one; Dr. Gulzar Cheema was another; and there was myself—that argued that Ottawa should retain a role in housing in the country, that it was important that we have a strong federal presence.

I thought it was interesting. One of the debates or challenges that I had was to go to the North End and debate the issue. I can't remember the facility, but what I do remember was the current Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) was there advocating and suggesting people support Charlottetown Accord, whereas I was on the other side saying that we shouldn't vote for the Charlottetown Accord. One of the reasons I gave was because I believe that the national government had a role to play in terms of housing in the province of Manitoba and in other jurisdictions. So, at the time I was fighting New Democrats, trying to get them to realize how important it was for the federal government to be providing leadership on the housing front, to continue to provide financial support.

So I'm glad to see that the Member for Elmwood, and I suspect that the Member for Elmwood was likely aware of this—I would hope that the federal New Democratic caucus has now reversed its position from the '90s in terms of seeing a stronger role in housing. Now, the Charlottetown Accord, of course, included a wide variety of different issues. I don't know in terms of what was said within the NDP caucus provincially back then or federally, but what I do know is that I sure could have used this sort of support, this type of a resolution or statement in terms of a THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED statement back in the mid-'90s when this debate was really taking place outside of the Chamber.

* (11:40)

Housing is a very important issue to me. In fact, the first critic role that I played inside this Legislature back in 1988 was that of Housing. I had a huge interest in housing because I was actually a member of the Weston revitalization board. I was involved with the Weston Residents' Association.

We were proactively trying to get government to do what it could in terms of revitalization

I know the Member for Transcona is familiar with the community of Weston and there's a lot of similarities of that community with the community of Transcona, in particular the older areas of Transcona, and a lot of the very same needs that are there, and ultimately advocating the support for programs like RRAP, Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program which worked so well.

In fact, one summer I was out at a university—I don't think it was green team, I'm not too sure where they got the money from, but one summer I spent promoting that particular program to people living in Weston. I suspect there are a number of homes in Weston today that have been revitalized because of the efforts of that Weston revitalization group and the Weston Residents' Association because they saw back then the value of having programs of this nature and encouraging people to participate, because what we can't lose sight of is the housing stock, the current housing stock in the province of Manitoba. As it continues to age, we need to ensure that that housing stock is, in fact, being maintained in such a way that it's not going to cause us more problems because it will start to compound into the future.

We need to start looking at communities, and I like to think that the area that I currently represent in terms of Tyndall Park is one of those communities now that government has to look at and say, well, look, what sort of programming can we provide to provide encouragement of homeowners and even landlords to invest money in home improvements.

Tyndall Park isn't that old of a community. It really isn't. You have probably sometime in the '70s, early '70s, late '70s, is when that community was really growing in terms of housing construction. Some of the homes would be there into the '80s, but then you'd have to go into Garden Grove to get into the '90s and beyond, or newer homes, if I can put it that way.

Well, the same principle applies because as the member knows, I am somewhat familiar with Transcona. There are a lot of those houses that are in that, let's say that 30-year age category, 20 to 30, which you have to be aware that's the time, quite often, when you have to start replacing roofs or the shingles on roofs and even windows start to become an issue and these are all important, cracks that start to form in housing.

That's why government really needs to do what it can to ensure the long-term viability of our housing stock. That's why government should look at programs that will provide that additional incentive so that 50 years from now, 60 years from now those houses that are the 20, 30 years old are going to be in that much better condition so that we're not having to look at investing more public dollars in order to try to maintain it because it goes beyond the private individual.

Housing and housing stock changes hands through times. Very few examples could be given where in 1925 a house was built and the same family still owns that house today. Yes, it exists, but nowhere near to the same degree. So housing changes hands and we have a responsibility to do what we can in regard to that.

I can't believe there's only two minutes left, Madam Acting Speaker, but having said that this is a very important component in terms of the development of housing and how our housing stock is going to look 30 years from now. It frightens me. In certain areas of the province, in particular even in the city of Winnipeg, to drive down some blocks where you'll see houses that are boarded up, vacant lots and it's a downward spiral that quite often infects a community. We need to look at what we can do to try to turn that around. It can be a challenge. It can take a great deal of time and energy. Quite often, you can't just leave it up to the immediate community residents. Quite often, out of desperation, they end up selling their homes because of the deterioration that has gone on in one block. We shouldn't be confused in thinking that a community is a community of only 2,000 homes. A community can be defined as one block, your immediate neighbours, individuals on the opposite of your back lane, and that's how it starts.

There's also a very strong correlation in terms of landlords when they start moving into a community where there becomes a higher percentage of renters. We need to ensure that we have more accountability from our landlords, especially that phrase of slum landlords.

Madam Acting Speaker, there is so much that we could be doing in the whole area of housing and programming for housing that even goes far beyond—non-profit housing is important, but this goes far beyond—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to rise to support my colleague from Transcona in his resolution regarding our government's commitment to public housing: to provide affordable housing to those individuals in Manitoba who require it.

I listened to the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) and it's clear, Madam Acting Speaker, to all those in the House that the Conservatives in this province don't really support public housing, don't believe in public housing. I think they take every opportunity they can in this Chamber—and we had this debate just a number of weeks ago—but they take every opportunity they can to discredit the concept of public housing, to discredit the concept of affordable housing for Manitobans who need this type of service.

We know that they tried to, in the 1990s, they tried to sell it off. As the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) mentioned in this Chamber last week, the housing stock had deteriorated so much that it wasn't even of any value, and even though they tried to find someone to purchase it, they had a very difficult time doing so. I recall those days.

But they did find one block in Selkirk. They did find one block in my community that had fallen on tough times because of neglect by the Conservative government at the time, and that was the Alfred Block—which was in the north end of Selkirk, part of the community that certainly needed public housing—a three-storey unit, about 18 units within the block, Madam Acting Speaker. They let it run down to such a point that it was no longer inhabitable, so they sold it off. They sold it off, and I recall in the community there was such an outcry because they sold it off, really, at rock-bottom prices.

An Honourable Member: Like MTS.

Mr. Dewar: They sold it off—much like my colleague said, much like the Manitoba telephone system. So they sold it off, and the unit sat derelict for a number of years, but then the person who purchased it, they invested some money back into it and the block is now—I think there are, again, it's about 18 units—so there are families living in it, but it no longer provides affordable housing. The rents are quite high and those who are currently living in it, although of course they appreciate having a place to live, as I said, the rent is quite high, and they've taken away that opportunity for individuals with lower income to have a nice, affordable living space.

I remember talking with Len Evans—members will know Len was a minister during the Schreyer government—and said that during those years, the federal Liberal government, headed by Pierre Trudeau, was very much involved in public housing and they were providing 75 percent funding to all new units built by the provincial governments across Canada. So the provincial government—the Schreyer government, the Pawley government—they were required to put in the 25 percent. Len said some provinces wouldn't participate, so they'd asked the federal government if we could take Alberta's share, and the Liberal government said, yes, go ahead. That's why you see a lot of the public housing that we have now in many of our communities were built in the late '60s and the '70s and the '80s, and right now they need to be upgraded and they need to be rebuilt. And we are.

* (11:50)

In my own community, for example, we are upgrading all the common spaces in all the Manitoba housing blocks: 445 Eveline, 215 Eaton, 605 Selkirk Avenue, Rotary Manor in Selkirk. New windows have been put into 445 Eveline and 215 Eaton. There's been a new roof placed on the Rotary Manor in Selkirk. We've made significant investments into my community, and I know communities throughout the province—recently opened the Eveline Place which is a 20-unit block and again, it's good. It's in the north end of Selkirk. The building of the block was sponsored by the Interlake branch of Canadian Mental Health Association. I congratulate them. It was a lot of work on their part. It was financially supported by the provincial government and the federal government, and I commend them—and by the city of Selkirk who provided them the land. So we require those types of partnerships, but it was, as I said, it was a difficult venture for the Interlake branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, but nevertheless a very fruitful one, and we now have this 20-unit block in our community.

I think I just said the member obviously did not listen to the comments of the Member for Transcona when he was introducing his resolution. Since 2000, we've invested over \$113 million, as I've said through partnerships, just as the one I've mentioned, to construct over 6,600 housing units. In April of 2000 our government announced investments of more than \$200 million towards a multi-year low-income strategy.

HOMEWorks! provides \$104 million which will target the homes from low-income Manitobans, immigrants, off-reserve Aboriginals and northern Manitobans. Clearly, I said we've invested another low-income housing strategy of \$160 million for new housing in Thompson, Brandon, The Pas, upgrades to Gilbert Park, Central Park, Lord Selkirk Park, Brandon Park and many others. All a member should do is perhaps read the resolution before they comment about our government's action. I urge all my colleagues in this House to support public housing, and I urge them all to support this resolution.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to put a few comments on the record about the Member for Transcona's resolution on public housing. It certainly is interesting to read the resolution. They talk about \$387 million. However, I am sure that the press release forgot to mention of that \$387 million, a third of that comes from the federal government, a third of that is coming from the City of Winnipeg but, however, they lay claim to the entire \$387 million.

Of course, out of their share of roughly—almost \$130 million, 40 percent of that comes courtesy of transfer payments too. In spite of their great pronouncements of spending money, if you just take that \$387 million, and I don't want to confuse people with facts, but let's just look at the numbers. You take \$387 million, \$100,000 for a housing unit, whether it's apartments, whether it's housing, nothing fancy, but \$100,000. You could have 3,870 housing units there. At four people per house, and again we're just using averages, you could have homes for 16,000 people. Will we have that? No, because already they claim about \$113 million spent since 2000: \$104.5 million spent on HOMEWorks!, Our Home \$42 million, BUILDINGFoundations \$160 million. They won't even tell us what Neighbourhoods Alive! is spending, and yet by their own admission within this resolution it says there is still clearly a great need for more affordable housing for low-income Manitobans. It's not working.

What you're doing, and I want to go back. You're claiming to build housing without a solid foundation. If you were to take this \$387 million, for instance, if you took this—that you're laying claim to the entire \$387 million in spite of you put in less than a third of it out of your own budget. If you took that

and you gave that money to an outfit like Habitat for Humanity, we'd have real homes. You would have people that can support themselves.

Instead, you're claiming to building houses, you're claiming to rebuild windows for people that aren't able to support themselves because you haven't helped them get their basic life skills. Building houses does not make homes. Most of us realize that, but throwing out grand press releases that say, we're going to spend 387 means absolutely nothing to that person who needs a real home. But that's what you're doing with this program is you're leaving people on the streets because, in spite of your press releases, in spite of the money that you've spent, you're not creating homes out of this money.

Great, great press releases, but, in real life, you're not assisting people in giving them the life skills because it's not just about putting them under a roof. Some people need assistance for life skills so that they can get educated so they can get a job so they can support themselves. That should be the focus of this program, not just putting up mortars and sticks and saying we build houses because, as we've seen, you have maintenance on those. The people that move in need a job in order to support themselves.

This program and this government fail to realize that you need to build a home, not just putting up houses or apartments or fixing up decrepit living accommodations, and by their own admission, they say that there's still clearly a need for more affordable housing. Certainly there is, but there's also a need to help Manitobans get out of the homeless situation that they find themselves in, and it's not necessarily their fault. But, if you have a government, all they do is talk about spending money that they don't have, that they're borrowing. Again, we've never seen money out of this government coming out of cash reserves because there is no such thing as cash reserves. They spend money. They waste money.

Just think, if you took that \$560 million that they're spending on a west side hydro line, how many more houses could you provide for low income Manitobans, and not just housing? You would be able to take some of that money and you would be able to provide them with life skills so that they could provide for themselves, and they wouldn't be homeless like they are right now.

This government has a penchant for making press releases, patting themselves on the back. They

take all these programs. You're talking about homeless people who are very poor, and you're talking about millions of dollars. Many of us cannot even relate to the millions of dollars that you're spending here. There's no plan in here. There's no foundation from which to build these homes, and I talk about homes—*[interjection]* I'm talking about building homes, not about building houses, because this is what we should be doing. This is what the emphasis should be on, and this government has no idea of how to do that. All they know how to do is spend money, and what are we getting for it?

By their own omission in here, we have homelessness on the rise all the time here. You know, it's a great topic to discuss about public housing, but perhaps the resolution should have talked about how they would take this money that they're claiming to spend, the three-way split, mind

you, of everybody else's money that they're talking about and how they would spend on creating homes and lives for people who desperately need a hand up. They don't need a handout.

This resolution just speaks of handouts, of spending money here in this program and spending money there in that program, and there is no goal in here. There's no set goal. Again, it's all about spending money. There are no set goals within this resolution or within this government. We certainly wish that they would—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order please. When the matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have two minutes remaining.

Being 12 noon, I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the session will resume at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 14, 2009

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