



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
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EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
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GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 10, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

## PRAYERS

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

## Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

**Madam Speaker:** I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY  
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

## Committee of Supply

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committee of Supply):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

## 1999 World Junior Hockey Championship

**Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to make a statement today on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I have copies for distribution.

I am indeed proud to stand on behalf of the Premier today to indicate to the members of the Assembly and the people of Manitoba and to congratulate the Manitoba bid committee members responsible for securing the 1999 World Junior Hockey Championship.

Just over two hours ago, the Premier and I joined with the Canadian Hockey League and the Manitoba bid committee to make the official announcement: Manitoba will host the 1999 World Junior Hockey Championship.

\* (1335)

The series of 31 games take place in Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk. It is expected to provide a \$6-million boost to our province's economy and strengthen the determination and sheer talent of Manitobans in our communities which they have shown once again in securing this prestigious tournament. In making the announcement, Murray Costello, the president of Canadian Hockey, cited many factors in selecting Manitoba's bid. He noted the special-event atmosphere built into Manitoba's bid impressed the selection committee, as did the strength and base of volunteer support available in the participating Manitoba communities. They particularly noted the support Manitoba's bid received from all the communities involved. Mr. Costello finished off by saying, and I quote, we believe this should be the most successful World Junior Hockey Championship we have ever held. What a great compliment to Manitobans involved in securing this bid for our community. Canadian Hockey knows that Manitoba can set a new standard of excellence in hosting this major event, and so do the people of Manitoba.

Our province has successfully hosted world curling, the Pan American Junior Track and Field Championships, World Board Sailing, World Youth Baseball and many other national sporting events like the 1991 Grey Cup, that many have said was the best Grey Cup in the history of the country.

This summer we will host the World Handball and Canada Summer Games in Brandon and, of course, just a few months after the World Junior Hockey tournament comes to Manitoba, we will play host to the 1999 Pan-American Games, the second largest sporting event in the world. The only event larger is the Summer Olympics.

Thank you to Canadian Hockey and the International Ice Hockey Federation for choosing us. I know Manitobans will make these organizations truly proud that they chose Manitoba. Congratulations once again to the Manitoba bid committee, Hockey Manitoba, the Province of Manitoba, the cities of Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk, the mayors of these communities, Winnipeg Enterprises Corporation and the many organizations who have made a commitment

to support this hockey tournament and its related events. We look forward to hosting the very best World Junior Hockey Championship of all time, December 26, 1998, to January 5, 1999. I want to congratulate each and every one of the bid committee and, as well, best of luck for all the sports activities that take place in this event.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, responding to this good news announcement, I would like to congratulate the total bid committee in securing Manitoba as the host for the 1999 World Junior Hockey Championship. We think this is a very, very positive announcement today. We are not aware of all the financial details of the bid proposal and we will obviously be questioning the government on our financial obligations, but the awarding of this tournament is very, very good news for Manitoba communities.

I am pleased to see that the tournament will take place in a number of communities across Manitoba, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk. I would encourage the government to look at the recent success in junior hockey in northern Manitoba, the OCN Blizzard with its great team results this year in its first year of hockey. Perhaps with this new and exciting team and this new popularity of junior hockey in Manitoba, in northern Manitoba, the bid committee could be flexible enough to expand some of the sites to be hosted in the OCN community and the community of northern Manitoba.

This is very good news for hockey fans and for our community. It comes on the heels of the Canadian women's hockey team winning again the world championship for. I believe it is the fourth year in a row, against the very, very competitive American women's hockey team. It also outlines, when we look at the competition in hockey, the changing nature of junior hockey, because we see a lot of our young people now going through the junior hockey ranks, but we see a lot of young people also now going through the high school and university ranks in hockey, whether it is in women's hockey or in men's hockey. So we congratulate the government on this announcement today, and we look forward to being part of the hosting of this tournament. We look forward to more flexible utilization of communities, and we think it is good news for this province.

\* (1340)

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 14—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 14, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension), and the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the contents of this bill and recommends it to the House. I am tabling his message.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Bill 16—The Council on Post-Secondary Education Amendment Act

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 16, The Council on Post-Secondary Education Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil de l'enseignement postsecondaire, and that the same now be received and read a first time.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### Adolescent Pregnancy Reduction Strategy

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, United Way agencies produced a report that should be ringing the bells in all of our heads in terms of the major crises of both offloading and the lack of focus on preventative programs to give our kids hope, rather than some of the despair that some kids are feeling at very, very early ages.

Madam Speaker, we have raised questions in the past in this House about an issue that is somewhat a symptom of adolescent difficulty in our communities, the highest teen- and adolescent-pregnancy rate in Canada. A subcommittee report that has not been released by the government yet linked the high teen pregnancy rate to the lack of adequate education and self-confidence, violence, abuse and poverty.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) in the last election campaign promised to develop, and targeted, strategies for community-based prevention to prevent unwanted pregnancies with our adolescent population. I would like to ask the Premier today: What action has he taken on his specific promise of two years ago?

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for that question, because indeed it is an issue in Manitoba, something that has to be addressed and has to be addressed in a very comprehensive way.

We do know from statistics and from information that has been gathered by the Department of Family Services and dealt with through the Children and Youth Secretariat that those that are born to adolescent single parents are six times more likely to need use of the child welfare system than those who are born to two-parent families and, Madam Speaker, we are working very aggressively through the Children and Youth Secretariat. By the way, I want to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that the steering committee reports are available to the public through statutory publications, and I am sure that members of the opposition have seen them—they were working documents—and our strategy that has just been released by the Children and Youth Secretariat will deal in a very proactive and aggressive way with that issue.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, I have read the report, the sanitized report released by the government dealing with teen pregnancy. Again, we see many of the recommendations from the government for action are offloads onto other agencies, voluntary agencies, community agencies, co-ordination with this group and that group, and when it comes to specific action, this government is somewhat hypocritical in what it says it is going to do and what it actually does.

In light of the Postl report and the other reports that this government has had, I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) specifically, in terms of our high teen pregnancy rate: Why has this government and this Premier cut the funding, the total funding for the committee for unplanned pregnancy, and why have they cut the education funds for planned parenthood? Does that make any long-term sense at all for prevention of unwanted pregnancies and teen pregnancies here in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Speaker, I want to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that in order to find the solutions—it is very difficult for me or any of us in our age group in this Legislature to believe that we can solve the problems or get the right messages to the adolescents who are experiencing the problems of teen pregnancy, both the males and the females. We have been doing some focus groups with young males to try to see how they can be involved in trying to solve the problem, and we need to be dealing with young females and asking them for their input on what messages will have an impact on young people, and we are. I have held meetings throughout the city of Winnipeg and in other parts of the province with groups of individuals from all different disciplines throughout the community, whether they be guidance counsellors in our school system, church leaders, and other professionals, to try to find a comprehensive plan and solution.

\* (1345)

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, perhaps it will be the guidance counsellors who have been left after the massive cuts by this government on our public education system.

The Postl report recommends the primary preventative strategy site for adolescents—obviously before that it is at the family—must be at the school. The government's censored report, which they did not release and has been released by the NDP, recommends that programs provided in schools must provide information on a range of options to prevent unwanted and unintended pregnancies. The government's sanitized report which they have released does not have any of these recommendations dealing with the school.

I would like to ask the Premier: Is the reason why they have excluded these recommendations dealing with the school based on the massive cutbacks that have taken place in public education that will not allow our primary site to be located in the schools because of the some \$43 million this government has cut away from preventative and educational programs in the public education system?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, for starters, as part of the questioning the member put forward, we have an increase of \$115 million in public schools' funding today more than we did when we took office. I think that needs to be repeated every time he indicates cuts, because it leaves a false impression that there has been an overall cut instead of a fluctuation on a steady scale going up, which is what has happened.

I should indicate as well, Madam Speaker, in terms of the main thrust of the question, this is something that Manitoba Education and Training is very aware of. It is something that we have been working with together as ministers through the Child and Youth Secretariat. We have done a number of things in the public schools to address teenage pregnancy in terms of educating the people who are in the schools now. We have put in place infant labs in a variety of schools—and I can name them if the member wishes me to in a subsequent answer—to enable young mothers to continue their education so their children have a better advantage.

#### **Flood Prevention Hovercraft Availability**

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Natural Resources. With the severe flooding along the Red River likely to begin unfortunately in just a number of days, for the second year in a row I would ask the Minister of Natural Resources whether he can explain to the House today why his government did not act on the request last year to get a hovercraft, test it on the Red River this year.

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, as it turns out, and the member is well aware, the equipment that would have been required is unavailable at this time. There is a

piece of equipment that is available that could probably be purchased, and if the member is advocating that purchase, then perhaps he should say so.

**Mr. Dewar:** Has the minister contacted authorities in Quebec to see whether the hovercraft there, which is used on about 10 to 12 rivers in that province, can be shipped here in time for the anticipated flooding of the Red River?

**Mr. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, the information that we were given is that that craft is not available, and it is under contract to the Coast Guard to deal with, I believe, some 15 river breakups that it is contracted to do in that province.

\* (1350)

### Red River—Hole Drilling

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** My final question: Will the minister ensure that the drilling of holes in the Red River continues until it is no longer safe to do so?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, I will undertake to review that. Certainly we are attempting to use this process as much as possible, and we certainly do not want to endanger anybody's life, but we are quite prepared to continue. The fact is that no one yet nor would we expect anyone to be able to tell us whether or not this will be highly effective or partly effective. We are hopeful it will be of some use, but, again, as I indicated yesterday in Estimates, we have to warn the people in that area that there is still a potential for ice jams as there is every year but some years more so than others. The main danger to flooding in the area that the member is concerned about would be as a result of ice jams, and of course we are looking to make sure that there is a warning system in place as well.

### South Transcona Water Retention Pond Funding

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, south Transcona, like many other areas in Manitoba, is preparing for flooding this spring. The difference is

that in south Transcona there was hope that this would be the last year that they would have to make these preparations. In the Estimates for Urban Affairs, the minister stated that he would be prepared to fund the south Transcona flood protection pond at \$1.75 million from the Urban Capital Project Phase III fund. He is waiting for a new motion from City Council to request these funds.

I want to ask the minister if he will confirm that the allocation for the Urban Capital Project fund Phase III is \$16 million for this year. Can he assure us that there is room in that fund this year for the \$1.75 million, and can he tell us how much of that fund has been allocated?

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs):** Indeed, it is a very serious problem, the flooding that is facing various sectors and particularly as the member for Radisson and the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) have brought forth this problem to me along with the councillor for the area, Shirley Timm-Rudolph, and the concerns that all three of them have expressed. I agree with them in a sense that this is a problem that can be addressed. We have indicated that we are willing to address the problem through our Urban Capital Allocation fund to the tune of I think it is \$1.75 million and a 50-50 cost-share arrangement. The City of Winnipeg in their request to the province had indicated that they would like to participate but with new money. We have set up an allocation fund. It is totally unique in Canada in the sense where we have dedicated funding to a municipal government like the City of Winnipeg. So this is someplace where they should be looking. I will endeavour to expound a little further in my next.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Madam Speaker, the question I would ask the minister is if there is room in the fund for this year. I want to ask the minister further if he has had any discussions with the city requiring them to submit for money from this fund, as opposed to new money which they are requesting, and why would they not have applied for the money in this fund in the first place so we would not have this delay?

**Mr. Reimer:** Far be it from me to speculate on the thinking of some of the councillors that comes about on

Main Street other than to the fact that we respond in a very conscientious manner to the resolutions that are brought forth by the City Council.

City Council had brought forth a resolution specifically asking for the cost-share on a 50-50 basis for the retention pond in Transcona. The stipulation that they put with it was that it was not to be the UCPA III funding but it was to be new funding from this provincial government.

Madam Speaker, we are of the opinion that UCPA III, that fund of \$96 million over five years, is totally unique. It is specifically made for this type of project. It is an allocation for capital improvements in the City of Winnipeg. It is the natural area where this money should be applied for. Where there is the availability to fund it, we have made the offer. We feel that this is the only possibility for them to pursue.

\* (1355)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Can the minister confirm for the House when his Department of Urban Affairs must have the request for money under this UCPA fund for this year in order for the retention pond to be constructed this construction season to prevent another flood next spring?

**Mr. Reimer:** I am led to believe that this is a topic of discussion, as we speak right now, at City Council. They brought it forth for discussion I believe yesterday at their council meeting. I would think that I would be given some sort of confirmation or direction or some sort of resolution, hopefully, within the next week or two from City Council as to what their direction is.

As I mentioned, this is a unique situation here in Canada where we form a partnership with the City of Winnipeg for the allocation of funds of a magnitude of \$96 million. As mentioned, this is the third allocation of funding. The first one was for \$90 million over five years. The second was \$96 million over five years. Now we are into a third allocation of \$96 million over five years. It is a tremendous opportunity for the city to look at capital improvements. The south Transcona retention pond fits the criteria. That is where they should be looking at.

### **Education System Canadian History Curriculum**

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, in the coming school year in September '97, Manitoba students will be able to graduate from high school without studying Canadian history at a senior level. To the hundreds of Manitobans who have protested this, the minister has always said: Trust me, everything is in place; there will be new curricula for Grades 1 to 10 with added emphasis on Canadian studies to compensate for this loss.

I would like to ask the minister today whether she could confirm that this new curriculum for Grades 1 to 10 is not available and in fact will not be available for September '97.

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I have to indicate to the member that when she indicates that students can graduate without history, she is wrong. Students do have to take history up until the end of Grade 10. Right now they take it up until the end of Grade 11. I have indicated to the member that they will be learning in those first 10 years the information that they currently learn in 11, plus they will have the additional opportunity to take advanced history in their final two years. They also have to take, from a list of complementary subjects, four out of six, and one of those six is history.

Madam Speaker, schools also have the opportunity, should they wish it, to make history compulsory at higher grades if that is their community choice. Through school plans and those types of things, that opportunity is available. So I indicate to the member that we will not be having students graduate without understanding and knowing Canadian history, as she is wanting to imply.

**Ms. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, it is the minister's intention then to withdraw the requirement for senior level Grade 11 Canadian history at a time when the minister clearly does not have the new curriculum for Grades 1 to 10 that she has talked about in Estimates, that she has talked about in this House before. That



curriculum is not ready. Is the minister going to withdraw the requirement for the senior level requirement for graduation in Manitoba schools?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Madam Speaker, the history curriculum is being worked upon in two areas. Western protocol, with the coming together of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, is embarking on common curricula preparation for a number of subject areas, one of which is history, social studies. While the history curriculum is not complete at this particular date, she is wrong to assume from that that the history curriculum will not be ready in time for teaching when it is required. I indicate to the member, give her my assurance that the teaching of history in our schools will continue to be emphasized and enhanced and not neglected, as she continues to want to imply.

\* (1400)

**Ms. Friesen:** Could the minister confirm that her staff have indeed advised her that the proposed new curriculum in Canadian studies, which was the prerequisite to the withdrawing of the requirement for the Grade 11 course, is not ready, that no texts have been written, no resource materials have been prepared, no pilot projects have been developed, that it cannot be put in place for at least three years and that in fact what we are looking at is the minister's millennium project?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** I indicate to the member that I do indeed have a millennium project. By the year 2000 we expect to see in place outcomes, measured standards in a variety of subject areas. Indeed, the target area for many of the introduction of those is in fact the year 2000, because the member knows that you cannot prepare things overnight the way she seems to be inferring that we can.

Madam Speaker, I will check and get back to the member as to the status in terms of the specific completion date, because the member is implying that I have been advised that it simply cannot be done until after the new millennium. That is not what I have been informed by my department, but out of not wanting to call her a person who would deliberately put false information on the record, I will check on what she

alleges and I will respond to her with the latest update from my department as to status.

### **Brew Pubs Legislation**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, under this government, the beer-brewing industry has not done well. First, we lost Labatt, and there we lost 150 jobs. Now we are going to be losing Molson and that is somewhat 91. [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) should be somewhat patient. We are talking about very important jobs here in the manufacturing industry.

My question is: Will the government do something not only creative but very positive for the industry by allowing or bringing forward legislation that would allow for brewing pubs in the province of Manitoba? I ask that question of the Minister responsible for the Liquor Commission.

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act):** Madam Speaker, the member, I believe, knows—and I did have a discussion with the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) and a member of City Council—that it is possible at this time for groups or for business people to open brew pubs if they would like to. Representatives of the Liquor Commission have been more than willing to meet with people who wish to open brew pubs under our current legislation. I believe the member may be aware of that.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister if she will then clearly clarify there are no impediments that will prevent brewery pubs from opening today, that in fact it can happen.

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Under the legislation as it exists, provided they conform with the legislation, the hours of opening and what is required, then it is possible for brew pubs to in fact open now. If the member is asking for something further from that, I hope he will make himself clear in his next question.

### **Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Local Brewery Promotion**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Will the minister request that the MLCC consider, or if not in fact act on, promoting locally brewed beer, as in the past they have promoted the sale of imported beer?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act):** I believe that the members of the Liquor Control Commission have been very willing to meet with any person who is an entrepreneur who would like to examine the opening of a brew pub or other facilities which require licensing. If the member has any concerns that have not happened, then I hope he will let me know about that, but to my knowledge, the Liquor Commission has in fact been very willing to meet and to explain to any entrepreneurs whatever the requirements are and what they would be expected to conform to under the current legislation.

### **SmartHealth Patient Record Confidentiality**

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, yesterday this government was wrong again. Neither the Manitoba Medical Association nor the College of Physicians and Surgeons has given a green light to SmartHealth's plan to computerize confidential health care patient records.

My questions are for the Premier. When both the Manitoba Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons say no to computerizing these records, how can ordinary Manitobans believe that their confidential and private records will remain just that, confidential and private?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** The interesting thing is that the member opposite is attempting to suggest that somehow medical records today are very, very secure. I recall—and this goes back for many, many years—instances when the New Democrats were in office where there was an entire set of records from a clinic in Transcona that was found blowing down the back lanes of the street, the back alleys. More recently we found private, confidential medical records in dumpsters in downtown Winnipeg because of the so-

called security that people have of their medical records. The fact of the matter is that electronic record keeping can be far more secure than any record keeping that we currently have today.

The other thing is that the member opposite has alleged that there were not doctors represented in the current process of developing the health information network. There are 19 doctors that are part of the development process currently. So again she brings information that is not accurate to the table, and she somehow alleges that people have something to fear from having their records electronically stored versus today when their records are open to the public by virtue of mistakes and mishandling of the information under its current form.

**Ms. McGifford:** Clearly the Premier has misunderstood and misdirected my question.

**An Honourable Member:** Again.

**Ms. McGifford:** Again.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Osborne, to pose a supplementary question.

**Ms. McGifford:** To the Premier again: I wonder if the Premier could tell us today, will SmartHealth computer network include, as Dr. Brian Ritchie understands, medical charts, billings, office charts and other confidential materials?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I will indicate a couple of things to the member opposite. Firstly, contrary to what she alleged yesterday, the information will not be the property of SmartHealth. It will be the property of Manitoba Health as it is today and always has been, so she is wrong on that. Further, I would indicate that—[interjection] No, she alleged. She alleged.

I will also indicate that this House will be dealing with, prior to the implementation of anything on SmartHealth, privacy legislation that will govern, whether it is SmartHealth, whether it is a public health information network or any other public information, the privacy rights of Manitobans, and it will supersede any information that can be used for any other purpose in the public domain.

So those issues will be dealt with prior to the SmartHealth implementation, and she ought not to be attempting to raise fears. What she ought to be doing is coming here and debating the privacy legislation to ensure that it does indeed do as we want it to do which is to protect the interests of the public and the individuals in the public.

\* (1410)

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Premier understands that the difference between a breakdown in paper documents and computer documents is that when a computer breaks down, all records are at risk, not a few paper documents. However, that is not my question.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. It is my understanding that that indeed was a question. If I heard the member correctly she asked if the First Minister understood the difference between paper documents and computer documents.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, in fact, it is the opposite. When the computer breaks down—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne, on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Ms. McGifford:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I was merely trying to pass a piece of information to the Premier for his edification. It was not my question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The question has been put.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, I am sure that—[interjection] Sorry.

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, a new question.

**Madam Speaker:** A new question. Yes.

**Ms. McGifford:** Is it not time for this government to finally admit that SmartHealth is just another example of the government's fascination with technology, to date a \$26-million dive into a computer system without having legislation at hand, in mind, in draft, not even knowing if protective legislation is indeed possible?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I just spoke at a luncheon today with a group of scientists and engineers who were involved in the technology development in our province. This statement of course speaks volumes about the position of the dinosaurs who are sitting opposite us, who have absolutely no—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, they keep arguing against any change that takes place in society. They want to be back as far as they can go in the past, in the horse and buggy days. This is what we are dealing with, and that is the tragedy of it when a group of presumably intelligent people who are elected to be in a position of trying to lead public opinion can be so backward as to suggest that technology is automatically bad for society. It is a dreadful position to take. It is an embarrassment to the New Democrats and it is why they will stay in opposition for a long, long time.

#### SmartHealth

#### Patient Record Confidentiality

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, will the Premier, who I know does not want to leave false and misleading information on the record, first of all start by confirming that patient records are not the possession of Manitoba Health? They do not belong to Manitoba Health; they belong to patients. They are entrusted by patients to doctors and courts have made that clear many, many times. That is the essence of this issue, the question of who owns these records and who has the right to put them on what forms of media. So will he confirm that he was wrong in indicating that Manitoba Health owns my medical records? It does not.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, what I can confirm is that they will not be the property of

SmartHealth as has been alleged by the New Democratic Party falsely.

**Mr. Sale:** On a new question, Madam Speaker. The Premier, I believe, has confirmed that he misled the House in the sense that the records would be owned by Manitoba Health. I believe that he has clarified it, but he has not done so unequivocally. I hope he will do so, that the patient records of Manitobans are owned by Manitobans.

My question is to the First Minister. Will the Premier now act to protect Manitobans' privacy by directing the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to abandon now any plans to put comprehensive, confidential patient medical files on the SmartHealth system?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, the system is being developed with some of the most extensive consultation that has ever gone on to the development of any system in Manitoba. It involves many, many stakeholders. It involves people whose major interest is to protect the records of the patient that are kept in trust by Manitoba Health as they are today. We will ensure that privacy is protected both in the health information system, the health information network that is being developed. It will be enhanced as well by this process, and we will ensure as well with the privacy legislation that is going to be introduced in this House that all information that is in the public domain is subject to the very most stringent regulations possible to protect the interests of Manitobans.

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, will the Premier explain why it is in the public interest in any way that my confidential health records, including charts, drug information, genetic disease, background of any kind, that that information should be available at pharmacies and hospitals and doctors' offices across this province? What is the public benefit that is being gained by this?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I think it is in the interests of individual patients, as well as the public, that we not encounter circumstances in which people are prescribed medication that might be in contradiction with something they are already taking. I think it is in the interests of individual patients, as well as Manitobans, that we not encounter damage to a person's health by virtue of the fact that a doctor does not know

some information that may have been obtained from previous examinations and previous treatments that should be a part of the patient record.

I think it is in the interests of individual patients that they not be overmedicated, that they not be overserved in terms of having successive repetitions of the same tests that they already have had within the last short while—where we have had instances of people being admitted into a hospital in southwestern Manitoba to get one series of tests, to be transferred to Brandon 48 hours later to have the same set of tests repeated, to be transferred to Winnipeg 72 hours later to have the same set of tests repeated. That is in nobody's interest; that is not in the individual's. It is not good medicine, and it is not good for the health care of the individual or of Manitobans. That is the kind of nonsense that he wants to preach, this dinosaur from the past, in this House.

#### **Immigration Family Reunification**

**Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Culture and Heritage. In the 1993 federal election the Liberals promised to make family-class immigration a priority. This, of course, is just one of the many broken promises on immigration made by the federal Liberals.

Family reunification has been made much more difficult, thanks to the Liberal government's head tax and other huge fee increases imposed by them. Has the province been invited to appear before the pre-election federal advisory committee reviewing the Immigration Act?

\* (1420)

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship):** Madam Speaker, the member identifies an issue where I believe we have some agreement, and that is our concern to continue family reunification and to speak up on behalf of the people of our province, where we believe steps taken by the federal Liberal government have interfered with family reunification.

There was to be a hearing in Manitoba—I believe it was on Monday—which was cancelled, but the answer

is yes, we had made arrangements to appear before that committee. We will be making sure that we do submit the position of Manitoba before that committee.

**Mr. Hickes:** Given that this province has had the most significant loss of potential immigration of all 10 provinces, why has this government not made scrapping the head tax the priority of negotiations with the federal government on immigration issues?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** This government has in fact registered its concern around the federal head tax. My colleague, now the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), the former Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, made that very clear previously, and I have continued to make that position known to the federal government. Most recently, I have had a communication with the federal government outlining that issue.

**Mr. Hickes:** Can the minister tell the House how much money Manitobans have had to give the federal government in immigration fees, including the head tax, since 1993? How much has it cost us as a province?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** I am certainly prepared to find that figure for the member for the Estimates process. I do not have it with me, but he does outline a very important point in that people in Manitoba, people wishing to immigrate to Manitoba, are charged a very significant amount of money by the federal Liberal government. Our province, Madam Speaker, has been making every effort to attract immigration to our province. We are on the Internet. We have participated in countries around the world to let them know that Manitoba is the place to come and to live and to settle. We have made our position known to the federal government; we are not happy with this detriment to our immigration.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

## NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

### St. James Canadians

**Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek):** Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. McAlpine:** It is my pleasure to rise today and pay tribute on behalf of all members to the St. James Canadians, the Manitoba Junior Hockey League champions for two years straight. The St. James Canadians beat the Opaskwayak Cree Nation 4-1 in the best of seven series. Last night the Canadians showed their leadership, spark and offensive production with a 3-0 win over the OCN Blizzard. The St. James Canadians will now play for the Anavet Cup against the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League winners between Weyburn Red Wings and the North Battleford North Stars. The OCN Blizzard also deserve accolades for their fairy-tale rise from a brand new franchise last May to their finish as the second overall club. Truly, they have a strong future ahead of them.

As a fan and supporter of junior hockey and the St. James Canadians who play out of the St. James Civic Centre in the constituency of Sturgeon Creek, I want to offer my congratulations to the management, the coaches, the players of OCN on a very successful season and best wishes to them in the future. The 1,500 fans present at last night's game and at all the games saw some of the best junior hockey level of hockey available in Canada today, Madam Speaker. However, with the announcement today that Winnipeg will host the 1999 World Junior Championships, all Manitobans will soon be able to witness the calibre of junior hockey unparalleled.

With last evening's win by the Canadians and this announcement, Winnipeg is poised to become the dominant junior hockey city in Canada and indeed the world. On behalf of my colleagues in government, I would like to extend my congratulations to Coach and GM Wayne Chernicki and the players of the St. James Canadians on their success as champions and wish them well in bringing the Anavet Cup to Manitoba for all of us to celebrate. This will be a tremendous event for our province and an opportunity to show the community spirit Manitobans possess and to show all Canadians why Manitoba is the place to live, work, invest and raise a family. Thank you.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** I would like leave for a nonpolitical statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable Leader of the official opposition have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to join in congratulating the St. James Canadians Junior Hockey team on their successful championship here again in the province of Manitoba and also join with all members in congratulating the OCN Blizzard team on, as the member opposite described, its fairy-tale rise in its hockey fortunes in this its first year of junior hockey.

It has been a truly phenomenal success that we have witnessed with this junior hockey team from The Pas with a lot of great hockey being played across the province, whether it has been in Winkler, Neepawa, Selkirk, Dauphin and other communities, and it certainly has been a very, very strong community strength, this new hockey team in The Pas, to have the whole community basically fill that arena every night to watch good junior hockey being played in our province.

I know that we all wish the Canadians well in playing—I believe its Melfort that is the Saskatchewan team. Well, I will find out—

**An Honourable Member:** Weyburn.

**Mr. Doer:** Weyburn. Weyburn playing Melfort, is it not?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Doer:** Okay. Well, I wish us well at playing the team in Saskatchewan. We hope that the St. James Canadians will continue to do well. I would say on behalf of the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) that I know he would want us to know that with such a young team in its first year, watch out in 1997-98 in the hockey season with the OCN Blizzard. Thank you very much.

#### Midget Speed Skating Championship

**Mr. Jim Ernst (Charleswood):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. Ernst:** Madam Speaker, I, too, want to offer my congratulations to the hockey teams that have won championships, but I wanted to share with you today the story of one of my constituents, Shannon Rempel.

Shannon is 12 years old and is an active speed skater. This past weekend Shannon participated in the Canadian national short track midget speed skating championship in Prince Edward Island. She came home with two gold medals, a silver and a bronze. In the 333-metre distance, Shannon set a new Canadian record, completing the distance in 34.81 seconds, breaking the Canadian record of 34.91 seconds. She won the overall midget girls class championship with the highest number of points derived from the medal scoring system.

\* (1430)

We can all be very proud of Shannon's accomplishments. There were over 10 provinces represented at the short track championship, and Shannon was the first Manitoban to win the competition since 1980. She also competed in the North American short track event the weekend previous in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where competitors came from all over the U.S. and Canada, and in this event Shannon placed second overall.

She has been speed skating for three and a half years and has certainly demonstrated her speed, her skill and her expertise in winning championships and events and setting new records. I would like to congratulate Shannon for her recent victories, and I know we will hear Shannon Rempel's name mentioned again and again as she develops and grows in the sport of speed skating. Thank you.

#### Brent Chief Day

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** May I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Swan River have leave? [agreed]

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Speaker, recently friends, families and supporters turned out in full force in Swan River for Brent Chief Day. Brent Chief is a Special Olympian who had the opportunity this year to participate in the World Winter Games in Toronto and

Collingwood last February. Brent was one of 12 Manitobans to qualify for the games which were attended by competitors from 60 countries. Brent is a member of the Manitoba Special Olympics team, has been a member since 1988 and took home a silver medal for the three-by-one Nordic ski relay and placed fifth in the one-kilometre ski, fourth in the three-kilometre ski and sixth in the five-kilometre ski.

When this reception was held, Brent was very outgoing in his appreciation to his coaches and to his family who have been very, very supportive, particularly his grandmother, Mrs. Snider.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize all Special Olympians who participated in these games and pay special tribute to Brent who is out every day skiing and building up his strength so that he can further his competitions, and I want to recognize his coaches and his family who have supported him very much. When you saw the enthusiasm on his face when he talked about his accomplishment, it was rewarding for all people who supported him, and I extend my deepest congratulations to him.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HOUSING

**Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Housing. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 83 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

\* (1440)

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** If I am not mistaken, I think that the Minister of Housing was in the midst of answering my question about the way that the department and Personnel division are dealing with concerns about staff. We had been having a discussion about consultation with staff that is showing staff have a number of concerns, that there is a concern about low morale and lack of training. I was suggesting that this is in turn possibly translating into an inability to deal effectively with tenants and other clients in the department and wondering if the minister can respond to that concern and tell us how the department is dealing with complaints about staff and how many complaints they receive and how these complaints are dealt with and that type of thing.

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** I think that this an excellent way to introduce ourselves to some of the things that we are, in a sense, trying to achieve over at Manitoba Housing in trying to come forth with some new directions and new philosophies over there. As pointed out earlier, one of the first things we tried to do was to try to get the employees and the staff to sit down and to literally give us the shopping list, if you want to call it, of complaints and concerns that they had that they felt we, as management and government, should be looking at and trying to make their job or their work environment more compatible with the goals and objectives that we and they put upon themselves. So this is one of the reasons why a lot of the complaints and concerns were put down. It was shown that we should put it down on black and white, in a sense, so that there is a realization of what the employees are concerned about.

I welcome this type of attitude and this type of direction, because I think it puts into perspective the fact of where we should be making some changes. This was the first time that our department had ever been exposed to that type of philosophy of telling us where

the problems are, writing them down. There was no sense of persecution or anything that we were wanting to get back at the employees or anything of that nature. It was a free and open discussion as to where they felt there were problems.

I think it is like anything. If we as a government do not give ourselves the ability to question our employees and ask them to tell us where and how they feel that there should be changes, it is very difficult to build up that type of co-operative movement of trying to bring in new elements of change. So I welcomed the idea of them coming up with a list of complaints, of concerns that they felt we should be addressing. The natural progression from that, as we pointed out, was to set up these committees for consultation and for co-ordination within the working groups. It is an ongoing process where there is ability to move freely through the system of problem solving. I think that, just as there was the ability for them to make suggestions of concern and grievances, there was also the ability for them to list what they felt they liked about the organization and what was positive in their workforce. So just as there is the listing of the so-called problems—

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for Radisson, on a point of order.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Mr. Chairperson, I just wanted to rephrase or clarify for the minister my question which had to do with how the department deals with complaints from tenants with Manitoba Housing about the staff specifically. That is what I am interested in finding out today.

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Reimer:** When the member was talking about complaints, I picked up on where we were more or less involved yesterday in the discussions, but in regard to employee complaints when they come in, I will just have to find out the exact procedure on that—if you can just give me a moment on that.

I was just wanting to get the proper sequence of events as to how things transpire when there is a phone call or a letter regarding complaints. The procedure that is implemented is that the complaint is taken seriously. There is staff or personnel assigned to try to come to some sort of resolve on that type of problem where that jurisdiction or that area where the problem is related to. It is then tried to work to a conclusion with the complainant in trying to come to an understanding or a decision on the complaint. There is also set up within the department an appeal mechanism. If the individual is not satisfied with the decision, there is an appeal mechanism set up, appeal panel, if you want to call it, so that that individual can go one step further in trying to come to a resolve on any type of problem.

\* (1450)

**Ms. Cerilli:** The other part of my questions was the way that the department logs complaints about staff. How many complaints have been received by the department about staff over the last year and if there have been any trends in increase in complaints about staff, particularly given the fact that we have just discussed a problem in the department of how there are a number of management changes that have occurred? There have been a number of concerns about that in the department, and there are a lot of positions being filled on an acting capacity right now, so I am wondering if the minister could complete this area of questioning.

**Mr. Reimer:** I have to apologize a little bit for the delay on that because it is a matter of procedure, I guess, in how complaints are handled. The member has asked regarding complaints about personnel, I guess, and the handling of—if I am correct in assuming that it is how we handle complaints that come in from clients or tenants in regard to personnel in management positions over these people.

From information that has been given to me, we do not keep a separate log in a sense of complaints against personnel compared to say complaints against the paint in the halls or something like that or the condition of the carpets in the halls, but it has been relayed to me that if there is a repeated complaint against one particular person, then that person is spoken to by our personnel manager, and management will make a point



of trying to find out why or what is happening that there is this abnormality of complaints regarding this one individual. But, as to the categories of how many were against personnel and how many were against the condition of the carpets, we do not have that type of breakdown.

I should add, too, that in pursuing any type of complaint, we do talk to the complainant too so that you get the two sides of the story. That is another way of trying to come to some sort of resolve if there is a problem with some individual.

**Ms. Cerilli:** The minister knows that I have written him on a variety of occasions about specific instances that are brought to my attention where tenants in Manitoba Housing Authority properties feel that they are being either discriminated against or that they are being treated in a harassing fashion by staff in the department, and on a case by case basis, I guess, we have tried to intervene. I am just wondering if any of those cases and if in any of these instances there is ever something that goes into the file, the personnel file of the staffperson. Particularly in the area of harassment, there is a particular concern. I know one of the cases that I am thinking of that I brought to the minister's attention involved problems the staff are having when the department is trying to place new tenants who are mental health patients into seniors apartments, bachelor suites. That has been one instance where there have been complaints that the staff—and the staff maybe also feel that they are not prepared, they are not trained to deal with the types of tenants that they are having to deal with.

So, just to clarify then, I am wanting to know if in any cases over the last year or the last couple of years there have been instances where a complaint from a tenant or a client has resulted in the information being filed in the personnel file with the Manitoba Housing department or authority.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, in dealing with matters of personnel, it is always of a very delicate nature in a sense because it is very significant as to possibly the career path or the direction that an individual is taking as he or she is trying to pursue a career in our Department of Housing. So we take very seriously any type of allegation that would come forth from a tenant

in the sense of some sort of conflict or harassment charge or potential charge, I should say, by a client and one of our employees with Manitoba Housing.

We try to work very, very closely in consultation and with the employee to try to come to some sort of resolve and understanding of the possible conflict that he or she is being perceived to have brought forth by the individual. We would hope that we could work with that employee so it does not come down to a point where, as mentioned by the member, there is a reprimand or a letter put on file against that person. There is always the opportunity to try to work with that person before it comes to that, but it has been reported to me that there have been incidents where there have been notations in the person's file of situations that have come up. As to the number, we would have to go into the files to be specific, but I am told that it is not that common or that regular that this comes about.

The best direction is to try to work with that employee for him or her she to see why there is a conflict, to work in a more consultative nature of trying to resolve the problem before it gets to a point where it has to be a letter of reprimand that is put on the file. As mentioned, it is not that common. The amounts, I have been told, that come to a point where there is a notation in the file are very few and are very seldom.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I would appreciate the minister getting some of those numbers for me and doing some kind of comparison over the last 10 or so years, even going back that far. On the same vein, I want to find out if the department has an harassment policy, and if I could be provided with any kind of a policy, perhaps coming through the civil service, but then also not just dealing between personnel in the department, but also because of the relationship that many of the staff have with tenants and the nature of that relationship where there is, I think, lots of room for conflict between caretakers and tenants and different staff in the department and tenants who are collecting a rent and arrears for rent, and all those kinds of things. I am wondering if there is a policy that will help guide the staff and if I can get a copy of that policy or if you could describe the nature of that policy here for us today.

**Mr. Reimer:** The employees that work for our Housing would fall under the general guidelines of the

harassment policy for all of the government employees. Our department does not have a singularly different or separate harassment policy as a guideline. The guidelines of the Manitoba government employees and the harassment policies that all employees of Manitoba government work for would cover, you know, this particular sector of our government in Housing.

So I can only say that we do have the Employee Assistance Program that has been set up for our employees so that if there is a problem they have something to refer to, but the general guidelines of practice for the government employees would apply to the employees that are under our sector of Housing.

\* (1500)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay. I might suggest that this is an area where the department would consider some other type of policy dealing with the relationship between staff and tenants just based on the kind of calls that I get. It is also related to the other area I want to get into now which is training of staff through your Personnel division.

I have also had, as I have suggested already today, concerns that staff are not receiving the training that they need in order to carry out their duties, especially with the changing populations that are being housed. The minister himself in his opening statement talked about aging seniors who have a large variety of needs who are living in the housing under his department.

So I am wondering if the minister could explain the types of training programs that are offered through his department for staff and if one of these areas could include more attention to personnel dealing with conflict, dealing with difficult tenants, you know, for caretakers and other staff that are involved with tenants.

**Mr. Reimer:** In dealing with any type of effective department, you have to have a continual program of training, and it is something that has been ongoing with our department. It has just been pointed out to me, just for example, for the last three years there is an ongoing training program with the institute of property managers, for certified property management programs. There are programs in computer training that we have been involved with. The member is, I believe, concerned about training for people skills, of dealing

with—between the management and clients in tenant relations and things of that nature. We do set up training programs in that venue through our human resources department. There is cross-training between various departments so that there is a knowledge of what happens between various other sectors in the department. It is an ongoing program of training. We train utilizing the civil service avenue of getting people involved. There is computer training that is happening, especially with the direction that we are taking in housing with our computer department. There is full-time training; in fact, it has been pointed out to me that we now have a full-time training supervisor that was put on, appointed in late 1996.

These are all some of things that we in the department feel are very, very necessary, to continue with this type of direction, because if you do not have training and if you do not make the opportunity available for people to be trained in some of the people skills—because of the fact that we are a service department. We are there to serve a clientele, and if you do not have those types of skills, we are at cross-purposes of trying to make our objectives.

So training has and will continue to play an even more important role in our department. I think it is very, very important that we continue that type of approach to it. So I feel that people skills and people training can have a significant benefit in our department as we proceed.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Still in a similar area dealing with personnel, we have talked a little bit about complaints about staff, but I also get people phoning who compliment staff, particularly the caretakers. I know there is one example, and this has been brought to the minister's attention as well, where there is one development where they want to keep their caretaker who is currently no longer, I guess, qualified to continue working as the caretaker.

So I want to clarify, first of all, the policy with respect to caretakers and their requirement to live onsite, and I am also wanting the minister to confirm the number of people employed by the department that are caretakers and, I guess, the ratio of tenants or units per caretaker, and if there has been any change in that area.

**Mr. Reimer:** The idea of having staff onsite is something that we recommend in a lot of our large units. In some of our smaller units, there is the ability that they do not have to live onsite because of the volume that they have to look after.

Our contention is that if it is a fairly large complex, the availability of the caretaker to be there in case there is a problem is a very high importance that we put on the contact for the reliance and the comfort of our employees—pardon me, of the tenants in the complex. Of the number of caretakers, we have 107 who are staff caretakers and we have 82 that are on contract for a total of 189 in our present complement of housing. So there is a mix of both within that, but our onsite caretakers are something that we are encouraging in our large complexes because it is a benefit to the residents and, to an extent, the security and the maintenance of our complexes.

\* (1510)

**Ms. Cerilli:** So, just to clarify then, this is 189 staff and contract employees that are working just in the Manitoba Housing Authority public housing, or does this also include nonprofit? [interjection] That is what I thought. But what I was wanting to get at is the policy in this area and if there is policy in this area that guides the department in knowing how big the complex is before they have to have one or more caretakers working there. I am interested in seeing some kind of comparison with the private sector. I mean, one of the concerns is that Manitoba Housing properties do not have the same kind of ratio that there is in the private sector in terms of having caretakers onsite.

**Mr. Reimer:** We do not have the exact number here in front of us, but we can give you a fairly close guesstimate as to the qualification. We usually insist on, in the large EPHs or the Elderly Persons Housing, that there is a full-time caretaker on. That is a requirement. When units are 40-plus units in a complex, we would want to have a full-time caretaker in a unit like that. When we look at family units, we look at a complement of about 30 units. If we look at some of the mixed units of various types of accommodations, we look at about a hundred units. So those are approximate, but as to the actual numbers, we would have to go through our files and find out exactly

which units, which large apartments have the full-time caretakers in them.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Is the minister saying then that it is a policy that—40 units per full-time caretaker for elderly persons and 30 units per full-time caretaker at the family level, but that is only for the complexes. You know, this is an area of large concern to the public. I mean, there have been problems, serious unsafety, for example, where toddlers have fallen out of windows because screens were not properly maintained, those kinds of issues. The deputy minister is saying that that is not true, so perhaps we can clarify, but I am just trying to draw it to the attention—the importance of this area. Again, I get calls and complaints from tenants that their requests for repairs are not handled expeditiously at times. I have in front of me, based on our discussion from last year's Estimates, a detailed breakdown of the caretakers' responsibilities. I am also concerned about how many of the caretakers that are working in the Manitoba Housing properties are part time.

The other area I am concerned about is for the single-family units or the smaller row houses where there is not a large complex, the availability of maintenance and caretaking in those developments, if there is some type of routine way that that is handled, or if it is simply a matter of having tenants fill out the request form and it goes in a pile, and there is the staff that is assigned to that region and they just have to wait until the staff is able to get there. I am sure that there is some type of prioritization that goes on. You know, if the furnace goes, that would bump up the request in the middle of January. This is an area that I am concerned about, and I just want to have some clarification on what the policy is in those areas.

**Mr. Reimer:** In looking at the whole area of complaints in regard to the tenants and to their particular units or their particular complex and things like that, I guess you have to bring into context the fact that as the complaints come in, there is a priority set on the emergency and immediacy of some of the complaints. For example, if a cupboard door falls off compared to a fridge going on the fritz, that caretaker or the maintenance people will naturally go to try to get that fridge replaced or restarted or fixed before they go to fix the cabinet door.

There are other considerations that have to come into being too. Sometimes the replacement of certain commodities or certain fixtures or the painting of a certain suite sometimes has to be considered in the overall planning of that whole building or a combination of buildings for the efficiencies of contracting it out on a large basis for the best pricing and also into the planning stages of when we can accommodate a lot of the things that can be done. So sometimes people will put a complaint in on a certain matter and it falls within the area of just the fact that we are looking at replacing it maybe in the short term or maybe in the very immediate future, and it may involve getting an accumulation of some other buildings and look at their priorities and putting it in together so that we can respond in a more efficient way.

\* (1520)

I should point out to the member that even though I say these things, we still have the availability of a 24-hour emergency number. The tenant, if there is something that is of a severe nature, we have a 24-hour maintenance person on staff, on call. During the blizzard of just last week, we had people on staff there to be of a helping nature and, as ever, staff responded in a very commendable manner in any type of situation that was brought forth. It is a situation that I think is very commendable of our department in trying to be cognizant of some of the concerns that our tenants have.

There will always be the situation where people feel we do not respond fast enough or that they feel that the response is not to their satisfaction. I guess it is all in the matter of interpretation as to how it is being done, but we respond in a very judicious manner in trying to come to some sort of resolve with their complaints. It is a matter of them recognizing and the individual recognizing that from time to time the priorities of how their severity of problem is interpreted sometimes will dictate the speed of reaction, but, as I say, if it is of an emergency nature and it happens in the middle of the night, we have people there for them.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Again, I do not want to spend too much longer on this area, but I just want to ask specifically two things. If we can compare the caretaker-staffing ratio per units with MHA to private sector units the

same size, how that would compare or—and compare it as well maybe to nonprofits. Compare it to Winnipeg Housing Rehab.

The other area I want you to just clarify or focus on is in terms of doing repairs. For example, I remember I had one constituent who called me up and insisted I come over to their suite. They lived in public housing, row housing where there were patio doors. They were told that they would just have to make do with keeping the doors shut with a piece of pipe or a hockey stick. The door was completely unable to be locked. The locking mechanism in the door handle was completely off, and it had been that way for quite some time. How much of a common occurrence is that, and how is that explained by the ministry? Is the problem that it is an aging housing stock?

The way the ministers have described it, the emergencies always get put to the top of the list. So there are so many emergencies going because the equipment, the fixtures are so aging that a lot of these other situations that require repairs that certainly cause problems and discomfort for tenants are continually put to the bottom of the list. I wonder if the minister could respond to those two things.

**Mr. Reimer:** I do not believe we have figures on the ratio compared to the private sector as to caretakers to units. I think we can try to get as much information that we can in looking at the comparison between the nonprofit units that we have and some of the other things that we can have access to. We can try to get that information for the member as a point of information.

The other item that the member mentioned was regarding the prioritization of repairs. I guess that is always the matter of interpretation, as she mentioned this. You do not want certain items to always be falling to the bottom of the list. I would hope that maintenance would recognize that there is a responsibility to respond to all requests in a manner that is cognizant of the individual's concern and not totally disregard the client, or the resident is totally always rejected in his or her request for repairs. Sometimes those are the situations that, if they come to my attention—and I must say, I have not had any type of correspondence brought to me along that venue where there was a continual refusal by

maintenance to repair a certain item—that I would be concerned about it too.

I think that if there are incidents like that, they should be brought forth for attention, either through the member or to myself or by the individual. The person has a right to complain.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Still on the topic then of caretakers and caretaking, I want to deal specifically with this issue at 110, 120 and 130 Markham Road. Some of the tenants there have gone to quite a lot of trouble. I am wondering if the minister is, first of all, familiar with this case. This is where a caretaker had been living onsite and then endeavoured to purchase a house directly across the street from these three housing developments. I believe that he was under the impression that he would be able to continue as the full-time caretaker, even though he was going to be living directly across the street then in a private dwelling. I am just wanting to see how the ministry is responding to this particular situation, if that is their understanding, that he was initially under the impression that he could continue on as a full-time caretaker while he was purchasing the home across the street from this housing development.

**Mr. Reimer:** I have been informed of that particular situation that the member is referring to. The individual was well aware that the requirement was that he live onsite. That was a requirement. It was made very clear that this was the position that the Housing department had given to the individual. The individual, for reasons of his own, decided to buy a home, as the member mentioned, across the street. The direction that was given to him was that our condition was that he stay onsite.

As to the arrangements that he may have made possibly with the purchase of the home and the circumstances and scenarios that were involved with why he would purchase the home when he knew he that he had to stay onsite, possibly he was looking at, maybe, renting that home to somebody and something happened, and all of a sudden he had to take possession of it. I am not privy to exactly everything that transpired as to why he moved off, what the final reason was. But he was given clear indication that he had to stay on that particular site, because that

particular complex warranted having an onsite manager. As to if there may have been extraneous circumstances for him purchasing this home, I can only speculate.

**Ms. Cerilli:** As I understand it, he is going to continue on as even part-time in some other capacity with Manitoba Housing Authority. Is that correct?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, he is still a full-time caretaker but he will be, I guess for lack of a better word, floating to various locations. He is still retained as a full-time caretaker.

\* (1530)

**Ms. Cerilli:** So this is a good example for us to look at in terms of how the vacancies are being filled in the department. I am not sure—if I look at the dates on some of the petitions that I have, it was back in February when this individual was vacating that position as caretaker on Markham Road. So I am wondering how long that position was vacant and what process is being used to fill that vacancy.

**Mr. Reimer:** I apologize. I was trying to get an update as to that particular location. If the member could repeat that. I am sorry, I apologize.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Sure. I am wanting to get a picture, then, of the process that will be used to fill that vacancy for the full-time caretaker on Markham Road. Is it filled now? Are you still in the process of having some type of competition for that position? Will it be filled internally from other people in the department? How long has it been vacant?

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, I have been informed that what we would do is inform the other union members within our department of the availability of a move to this particular area. If that was not fulfilled or accomplished through that way, then there would be an open competition or a job ad put in the paper for the position, but we would look in all likelihood within through our existing structure and through the union firstly. I believe that there is a caretaker onsite right now. Now, whether he has been permanently appointed to that position, we would have to find out

exactly. We do not have our Personnel person at the table here right now.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I will sort of move on to another but related area. We discussed the other day the number of positions that are being filled in an acting capacity in the department, and I am just wanting to clarify if the minister can tell us a little bit more about the amount of mobility in staff turnover in the department. How many of those positions have been filled through an open competition? How many have been filled through placing someone else who has been, you know, reappointed from the department or in some other fashion, and how many have been filled through an open competition through the civil service?

**Mr. Reimer:** Specific numbers we will have to, you know, go to our Personnel department to get some numbers for the member, but it has been pointed out that we try to look within in a sense and try to fill positions in that way. We have not had that many. In fact it has been pointed out to me that—I do not know whether we have had any outside hirings in a sense of new people coming in. They have either come through the internal system or through other ways, but, with caretakers, there is a turnover there. I think I mentioned the other day, when we throw in the number of a 15 percent turnover, that is mainly where the turnover is, in that area. That area there, there are open competitions and ads in the papers placed for those positions. Once you start to get into the management or the level of the system, a lot of it is an internal reorganization and redirection of peoples and their skills. As to numbers, I guess we would have to get our Personnel person to come back with something for the member.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Again, I am just trying to wrap up this area. Still on the topic of caretakers, I know there was an article in the paper the other day from the Caretaker Resource Centre, and this is sort of an offshoot of AIM, the Apartment Investors Association of Manitoba. They had a news release a while ago, and I phoned up the fellow there and one of the things that they are now offering is training for caretakers. I am not sure, but it sounds like that is one of the areas that through your own department you have to provide training in. They are looking at a program, approaching the provincial government Family Services and possibly the City of

Winnipeg, I guess as well, of having people on social allowance participate in their program to be trained as caretakers. With the high percentage of tenants who are on social allowance living in Manitoba Housing Authority properties, I am wondering if this is something that the department is aware of; if they are considering looking at some kind of program like this, if that is something they have considered.

**Mr. Reimer:** We are dealing with an association. The acronym on it is BOMA, which is the Building Owners & Managers Association for the training of caretakers, and this is an association that we feel that we can come to a better understanding and a better working relationship in trying to bring forth training. The association that the member mentioned, I am not that familiar with that organization and I am not sure whether the department is—we are aware of it, but I do not think that we work with them in any type of training programs.

\* (1540)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay, just in sort of wrapping up this whole area of discussing the personnel and Executive Support, when looking at the Estimates page 19, quite a number of the areas in this, what I would call senior management and executive administrative area, have had an increase this year: Transportation, \$5,000; Communication has gone up by a couple of thousand; and some of the other areas as well. I am wondering how the minister can explain this. I mean, some of the salaries have gone down, but generally there have been a few thousand dollars increased in this area. It is a concern at the same time where you have made major cuts in programs like SAFER and SAFFR that are going to do the business of what this department is designed to do, and that is to support the housing needs of low-income Manitobans. You are cutting there, and at the same time there is increased Transportation and Communication funds for senior management in your department. I am wondering if part of that transportation is to provide staff to travel to your staff meetings at the Art Gallery or the Norquay Building; if that is one explanation, or how else you might be able to explain these increases?

**Mr. Reimer:** In regard to the increase in the communication sector, most of that increase relates to

the increase in the computerization, the telecommunications area of e-mail and things of that nature of the sophistication of being in touch with our people in regard to their maintenance and improvement programs, responding to emergency situations. Communications is something that is increasing and should be really of an increasing nature in a sense of trying to do the job better.

Transportation, I can assure the member that there were no buses or no taxis paid for in regard to getting over to the Art Gallery for the meeting with the staff. They walked because it was not that far, or maybe they got over on their own. So that amount is showing an increase. I can only possibly attribute the price of gasoline and the price of oil to an extent of going up. If the member recalls, last year or years before, gasoline was almost 10 cents a litre cheaper than what we are paying for it now, and we do have to pay a certain amount of allowance for transportation in there. So it is an amount of approximately, I guess it is \$5,000 that it has gone up. So it is amazing how sometimes those little things can add up.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I guess I will have to accept that explanation from the minister, but it does seem odd to have that much of a transportation budget increase. I think I said yesterday that I had heard concerns, particularly in the rural areas, about the way that the regions have been reorganized, that maintenance staff in particular are having to do a lot more travelling and running around than they used to under the former structure of Manitoba Housing Authority. That may be something that the minister wants to look into. That would not I guess directly affect the Transportation line in this division that much, but, you know, it is difficult for the department while they are making such huge cuts to programs as important as public housing, SAFER, SAFFR, co-op loan program that they are having these kinds of increases in their department for Administration.

I do not know if the minister wants to add anything there, but I am going to move on now to discussing some other areas.

**Mr. Reimer:** I was just going to mention, in the transportation area there have been certain expenditures attributed to that line for the consultation with other

provinces in some of the effects that are happening with what she is aware of in all the areas of concern that we have for housing. So there would be some added dollars involved with that too.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I want to move on and ask some questions more about the Finance and Administration area in the budgeting in the department. One of the things, it seems like there are quite a few things added in the Estimates book under Finance and Administration in the description of activities and objectives and Expected Results, and I guess that is what I am looking at asking some questions about here.

One of the things is reviewing the appropriateness of tax assessment levied against the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation properties and initiate appeals as required—and that sort of struck me after the fiasco in the City of Winnipeg in terms of their Assessment Department—and I am wondering if that has resulted in any significant reassessments and what kind of dollar figure could be attached to that.

I have with me the annual report. It is only the annual report from '95-96, and I am assuming that this is the most recent one that is available. So I am going to be referring to this quite a bit. If the minister can direct me to a line in the annual report that deals with this area of tax assessments, then I would appreciate that. I am on page 35 from that annual report, and I am wondering if that is where I would not expect to find this line.

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

**Mr. Reimer:** I think what the member is referring to is the appeals process that we are setting up with all our properties in our Manitoba Housing portfolio. One of the things that we have been actively involved with is looking at our assessments. We are of the opinion that if there is a savings to be realized by looking at our properties and the assessed value that has been put on them and that if there is the ability to appeal some of these assessments, that we should pursue it. We have done this.

As pointed out by the member—I can refer her to page 39 of the '95-96 annual report where it does say grants in lieu of taxes, and she can recognize that we have

gone down by well over \$2 million of a savings in our budgetary considerations. So the appeal process has proven to be of a benefit to the department, and I believe that we are still in the process of appealing some of our other buildings and working with the assessment on those too. This is a conscientious decision that we had taken to try to realize some potential savings.

\* (1550)

**Ms. Cerilli:** So what the minister is telling me is that the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation is now saving approximately \$2 million annually or \$1.5 million in their tax bill to the City of Winnipeg. I just want a little bit more explanation of the nature of what has been involved in these appeals and reassessment. What has led to this \$1.5-million or \$2-million saving?

**Mr. Reimer:** This is a very interesting topic because there is a—we work very closely, naturally, with the federal government. The federal government, in their dealings with some of their properties, have become very, very heavy-handed in a sense, if you want to call it that. They have said that they are only going to pay a certain amount of money for their grants in lieu of taxes and more or less said that is the way it is going to be. What it does is it puts us in a position where we have to be very analytical and critical in our assessment of what our properties are worth and the values that are associated with them. This is one of the reasons why we did this reassessment.

I should point out to the member that saving is for our total—[interjection] Province-wide, yes. It is not particularly for the city of Winnipeg where this is happening, because we have properties all over. It has to be realized that the \$2-million savings in this book is shared with the federal government, too. So what you see is not necessarily what you get, because the feds take half of our judicious—[interjection] In our good management and in our proper. So we get dinged for being good managers, and they get the benefit from it. They come along, and they become a flat hand on what we are going to get.

It puts a tremendous burden on our financial analysts in our department to try to come up with a good set of books to work within our parameters of spending. It is

a very interesting relationship between the federal government and the province and to which way the feds are going. I know we are going to get into further conversations regarding devolution, and I welcome that part of our Estimates, because I think there are a lot of things that the member for Radisson and I should discuss about this. On this particular item, we do not share totally in that \$2-million saving.

**Ms. Cerilli:** My question, though, is that I want to get a clear understanding of how this \$2 million or so was arrived at. I hope I am understanding this correctly where if the amount of taxes you are going to have to pay on a housing property is going to be reduced, that would mean that the assessment on the value of that property would then also have to be reduced. Is that correct and is that what is happening? So actually what we are finding is the sale value or the value being allocated to these properties is being reassessed at a lower amount.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, what has come about is the institution of the ad valorem system of taxation in our province where it is based upon the value of the property in the market. So what was so called built for an example of \$3 million, some sort of complex when it was first built. say, maybe about 10 years ago, the only true value on that building right now is what the assessed value is. The only way that you can do an assessment on your building is literally go to that facility, compare it to the market what has been sold so that a number can be arrived at. That is your basis of assessment, and then your taxes are assessed out of that evaluation.

I know the member had referred to very briefly in her opening statements about a drive-by assessment, but what we are doing with all our properties is try to get a proper evaluation on it because it benefits us as a province. If we are going to give grants in lieu, we should be doing it on the property value and the true assessed value—not on the perceived book value of what was first built and how much it cost—and use those figures. It is a tremendous benefit and a tax saving to the people of Manitoba, but at the same time, as I said before, we have to share that monies that we realize. The federal government benefits on a win-win situation out of what we are doing here in Manitoba.



**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay. I know I have with me the listing of all the properties in the province. I am assuming that this was done across the board for all the—it is not finished yet—but it is including the entire portfolio of nonprofit, sponsored, and public housing. That is correct; I see you nodding. What I would be interested in finding out is which of the properties have seen a reassessed value? I am sure the department has that information. I am not expecting to get that right now, but I would be interested in seeing that at some point and to compare it with some of the other information I have from the department.

**Mr. Reimer:** As I pointed out to the member, this is an ongoing scenario that we are reassessing. Not only is it something that we will be doing on a conscientious basis this year, but I think that we have initiated a positive review. I am not saying it will be an annual event, but I think that it will transpire as there is a recognition that there is a perceived imbalance. The number of units that will be reassessed—I should not say every one of them will be, because there are some that fall within the parameters of reason when it is looked at not only as the value on our books, but we can recognize what is happening in the market.

Our department will go through the list that the member has and do a comparison. Where there looks like there is truly an anomaly, those are the ones that will be assessed. We will do that. We look at hopefully some significant savings along the way once the assessment is brought up to date on an ad valorem system of what the building is worth. Hopefully through computerization and things like that, you can almost get instant access to certain blocks and certain locations and have a comparison spit out of a computer, very similar to what they do with the Real Estate Board right now where you can do a cost analysis of a home on Chestnut Street and what it sells for. We are hopeful that we can be able to do that within our portfolio to get a good comparison. It is an example of modernization that we feel is well worth the effort.

\* (1600)

**Ms. Cerilli:** I will look forward to getting that information when it is available to the minister. Further to this, though, I would be interested in knowing—looking at what the minister was good enough to send me from questions I asked last year in Estimates is a

listing of the social housing units that are being considered for surplus, being declared surplus. I would assume that these properties would certainly have gone through this reassessment process prior to being put on this list. So I am interested in having that clarified or confirmed that that has gone on and in how many of these properties—I mean, I am working from this list now that is, I guess, a year old, and I will get into a little more detail about this, the changes in this list later.

What I am wanting to clarify now is the properties that are being considered surplus. How many of those have had a reassessed value and if that is something that has been done?

**Mr. Reimer:** What I can give to the member is we would have to look at the list that the member has there and do a comparison. Individually, I do not think we have the schedule of reassessments and the results of reassessments with us at this particular time, and the comparison would be hard to do. It would be strictly on a speculative basis at this time, so those are some of the things that we would have to look into for the member.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Similarly, though you have already referred to the fact that you have had to share this \$2 million or so with the federal government, you have taken a closer look at monitoring the federal recoveries. I am wondering if there has been any dollar figure there where you have saved yourself some money, if you can tell me what that is, and if that is going to be reflected in the annual report anywhere here.

**Mr. Reimer:** I learn a lot from these Estimates myself, you know, and the efficiencies of my department; it is amazing how fast they work sometime. I have just been informed that when we find out that there is a discrepancy, we bill within five days to get our share of the federal monies. We do it on a very judicious and a speedy way of trying to get as much as we can and as soon as we can from the federal government. I can tell by the enthusiasm of my financial director there that he relishes the fact of trying to get this money back from the feds as soon as he can, so I encourage him to stay on the fast and speedy track.

There are a lot of ramifications in dealing with the federal government, but I have been assured that we

work as fast as we can; if there is money owing, we go after it.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I appreciate that, and that is stated clearly in the Estimates booklet including that you want to bill them within five days, but I am just wanting to see if you are showing anywhere, or if you can tell me how much more money you are squeezing out of the federal government through this process. I am wanting to go—

**Mr. Reimer:** It is based upon expenditures. As we are spending our money, we are either billing back to the federal government, because of the various agreements we have, we are either billing back 25 percent, 50 percent or even 75 percent of the expenditures. So it is a paper trail that speeds up as fast as we can in trying to get our money back.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Another area in that same line is that you are trying also to do the same thing with tenant revenues collections from tenants. I am looking at the annual report from '95-96 at page 38, which shows the revenue from rents. It shows there approximately \$44.5 million—it is hard to see if that is a decimal or a period—for MHA and then for sponsored housing. It is comparing '95 and '96. I can see that there has been an increase in the revenue from rent, the total revenue. Now, this is total revenue from rent from '95 to '96.

I am wondering how you explain that because, I think if we also looked at it, we can see, when I also look at the number of properties, for example, there have been in the same period 89 properties that have been lost from the social housing portfolio. We know that over this time there has been a rent increase, rent geared to income, to 27 percent.

I think you can see where I am headed here. I am wanting to do some comparison of, if we looked at the revenue per unit, what are we seeing here? Are we seeing that this is becoming a larger percentage of the revenue from the budget to any great extent? How would you evaluate the increase in this area in terms of the revenue from tenants rent?

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the things that has to be taken into consideration when you look at rental revenue is the fact that if our occupancy goes up, we are going to

realize more revenue. One of the things that we have worked quite diligently at is trying to bring forth—we have units available. Let us try to utilize them. Naturally, if we are renting more units, we are serving more of the need in the community. This is one of the reasons why we would have increased rent. It is not necessarily tied into the fact that we are charging more. In fact we were going to be collecting more because we were filling vacant suites.

I think the member recognizes that vacancies are something that we all try to bring down, because we have got public housing available for individuals in need. If we can fill them, it is going to mean that our revenue collections will go up, but it is not at the expense per se of rentals and the percentage that has gone on. We have stayed fairly consistent. In fact, we have been very consistent in the fact that our rental rates here in Manitoba have stayed at 27 percent for family units and 25 percent for bachelor suites. This has proven to be beneficial. I would rather try to work on increasing the occupancies of our units than try to increase the percentage for the sake of making more money in my rental units.

\* (1610)

We have consistently overall had a vacancy rate of well over 10 to 12 percent, I guess, in all our units but, at the same time, some of our units, our complexes are experiencing vacancies of 25 and 30 percent. Others are right down to nil with very, very little turnover. Ideally, I would like to have 100 percent occupancy in our public housing. That is a tremendous benefit for people in need in the social housing area, plus the fact that it will solidify even more revenue for the sake of maintenance, improvement, and upgrading of our units.

I would rather my staff concentrate on filling the units instead of coming to me with a proposal to, say, let us raise it 1 percent or 2 percent. I know the previous minister was of the same opinion, and that she worked very hard in that same type of direction with conscientious efforts and conscientiousness of government. She takes forth that same type of attitude in her new portfolio that she has. These are some of the benefits of the exposure with Housing and dealing with people that the present minister, after she left this department, she takes forth in her new ministry. These

are some of the tremendous benefits that we get out of being Minister of Housing.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am actually glad to hear the minister say that. I think we are going to get into discussing it in more detail. Something I have asked before of this government in these Estimates is their strategy for filling these vacancies. I have the list with me, and I know that that is an ongoing problem, particularly in the inner city of Winnipeg. I am glad that his focus is on filling those vacancies rather than continuing to increase the rent geared to income paid by these tenants.

I am still wanting to ask, if we look at 1997 and compare that to the other two figures in the annual report that I have here, what is the rent revenue now this year—separating it out again if you can—or the total Manitoba Housing Authority managed, as well as the sponsored and nonprofits?

Basically, what we are seeing here is that you are getting an additional almost \$2 million in rent from low-income Manitobans living in Manitoba housing properties. We know that that is an increase because there are fewer properties and rental units available. I do not think your vacancy rates have improved since then. Basically, that is what we are able to see. Over \$2 million in that '96 over '95 year has come from low-income Manitobans' rent for Manitoba Housing Authority.

**Mr. Reimer:** I have been informed in looking at—for 1997, naturally we are looking at Estimates at this particular time because of the fiscal year, but I would hope that the trend that we are establishing to try to fill these units would continue. I would think that we would look at, at least, trying to match this amount in 1997 to continue this type of trend of filling units and to try to raise revenue this way.

I guess, as 1997 unfolds, we will have a better idea six or nine months or further down into our budgetary year in knowing how it is all transpiring for our rental revenue. I would think that the trend that we have started, hopefully, we can still continue to expand on that type of direction with our revenues. I can only guesstimate at this particular time as to how it will finally come out for 1997.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay. Maybe then tell me what your guesstimate was for '96, and I can compare for myself, if we are going to hit that, if you think that we are going to reach that level. I do not have my Estimates book with me from last year.

**Mr. Reimer:** In dealing with the budgetary considerations, we do not have that figure with us.

**Ms. Cerilli:** It is in last year's Estimates.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, we do not have one with us, so we cannot look at it that way. We can get it for the member as to what was the estimate when we were doing the budget at that time.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I guess what I am trying to get at here in all of this is to try and determine how much of this is attributed to the increase in rent over the years and how much of this is going to be attributed to the trend that the minister is talking about where they are filling these vacancies. I have a concern about the levels of the rent being charged on these properties. We have discussed that before. I can appreciate this is difficult to determine, but you have got an estimate here for \$57.5 million. In order to arrive at that, you have had to do some of these kinds of calculations in the department. How are you dealing with this? Then I am going to get into asking a little bit more about the vacancies.

**Mr. Reimer:** I can point out to the member on page 43, I think we are both looking at that same line there regarding the rental revenue. The estimate is just over \$57 million, almost \$57.6 million. So it does show again an increase of revenue that we will be looking at. We still have that type of optimism and direction that we can accomplish these types of revenues just by being a little bit more, filling of our units and making it more attractive for people to get into the rental field that we have available for them. It was just pointed out to me that that is where our estimate for 1997-98 is.

**Ms. Cerilli:** What I am trying to get at is, I am just realizing after I asked the last question, that you have not had a rent increase since 1995. So the big jump—and I do not know whether there is a chart in the annual report that will show this—the increase would have occurred between '93 and '95, when there was an increase by 2 percent in the rent geared to income.

What I am finding kind of curious is that, if you are continuing to project these increases in rent revenue, you are not anticipating any additional percentage of RGI. You are actually offloading some of your stock; maybe that surplus is not filled anyway. Then I guess what we should be talking about is this strategy that you have for filling these vacancies.

I have with me a listing of what the vacancies are for the entire province in both Winnipeg and the rural areas. I am wanting to get you to sort of update me on this area then of what kind of progress has been made. Compared to last year then, how many more suites have you filled over the Estimates from last year, from when I got this document?

\* (1620)

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the things that we have instituted to try to address the vacancy rates in the various units is we have initiated a marketing team. We have two ladies that are marketing our units. They took on, as a task, 601 Osborne Street. I believe it is called Fred Tipping Place. When they went into there, there were 37 vacancies. There are now only three vacancies in that unit. That was done within 60 days, from what I am led to believe. They have just gone over to 125 Carriage Road, and they have filled five units in there. The team is proving to be fairly successful in their endeavours, so we are looking at expanding that marketing team, of going out and looking at other areas of units that can warrant their attention.

These are some of the things that we are doing in trying to make the availability of our units more open for rental. So marketing them and getting them exposed to the people that can use them is something that can be of a benefit to the utilization.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

As I mentioned, when you look at 601 Osborne, in a 60-day period I guess it was, approximately a 60-day period, renting 34 units, I would think that they are doing a fairly good job for us. Hopefully, we can even do a better job.

**Ms. Cerilli:** It is interesting. I know, I spent quite a bit of time on this last year in Estimates as well talking

about the strategy that is going to be employed. Interestingly, you have developed something. I am curious to find out what exactly they are doing that is new with this marketing team, what approach they are taking. I am also curious to find out how it is you are selecting these two, first of all, and how you have prioritized other complexes for this management marketing team. I should say, to work in.

I have got this list with me that I received from April 30, '96 which has all the projects, I guess, with a 10 percent or more vacancy rate. A lot of these include the big ones—Flora Place, Gilbert Park, Lord Selkirk Park, the ones on Ross and Pacific, that are sort of the larger problem blocks where there is a really high vacancy rate. So, is there going to be a different type of strategy to try and deal with the problems in those vacancies? How is the department going to proceed? I have asked a number of questions there; I will be patient.

**Mr. Reimer:** I think I will try one at a time. One of the criteria in looking at the marketing team was to look at areas where there was a high vacancy rate, try to work within them and try to fill these units. The team will look almost on a project-by-project area and try to come to some sort of analysis as to where they will move next. It should be pointed out too that under the selection criteria prior, we have changed some of the requirements.

Now, if a person was wanting a one-bedroom unit, and we could not particularly fill that or find that particular person a one-bedroom unit, but there was a two-bedroom unit that was available, we have said, let us utilize that unit and get that person into it, so that we do not discriminate against the waiting and waiting for that person to move in a particular complex, just because he or she only is qualified or eligible for a one-bedroom unit. If there is a two-bedroom unit available, let us get them in there, and let us try to accommodate them so that they can live in that particular area. So we have changed that. That has increased the occupancy rate. I think that it is a common-sense decision. I mean, just because that person under the criteria can only live in a one-bedroom—[interjection] No, a common-sense decision.

If that person, because of his or her situation only qualifies for a one- and there is a two-bedroom

apartment in there, and they are waiting and waiting, let us try to accommodate them. So we have done that too. It has proven to be quite beneficial. It makes for a better relationship with the tenant, because that person then is happier to be in that location, and in all likelihood, he or she is going to prove to be a good tenant for us.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I think I will take the member for Burrows' (Mr. Martindale) suggestion and deal with these issues one at a time. So you are telling me a little bit more about the strategy that is being used with this marketing team. One of the things is that you have targeted some of these buildings which have higher vacancy rates, and you are offering people two-bedroom units, I am assuming you mean then at a one-bedroom rate.

**Mr. Reimer:** That is right.

**Ms. Cerilli:** And that is increasing the occupancy. The minister has confirmed that that is correct, so that is one question answered.

The other part of it, I was asking what are you planning to do next, or which developments are you planning to deal with next? Do you have a list of the ones that have been prioritized?

**Mr. Reimer:** Other areas that we will be concentrating on are trying to fill vacancies in 101 Marion, 515 Elgin Avenue and also 269 Dufferin Avenue. If we can realize additional savings in these areas, we will also hopefully fill up the occupancy in there. We feel that, as pointed out, as mentioned, regarding the one-bedroom units and moving into two bedroom, if there is no waiting list on those two bedrooms, we are going to move the people in there.

**Ms. Cerilli:** There are all sorts of questions we could ask about this, but I am realizing that we have to, I think, pick up the pace here a bit.

I am wondering, then, if you have done some accounting to look at the cost that is being incurred from this approach or if you are just considering it is better to have it filled at the lower rate rather than not having it filled at all, and if there are some that you are filling through this approach at the regular rate. The

other thing is how it is that the marketing team is identifying the tenants or the prospective tenants.

\* (1630)

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the ways that this team I referred to is trying to fill up these units is they have become very innovative in their approach to try to fill these units, and I have to give them a lot of compliments on their initiatives. They have utilized such things as a neighbourhood drop in advertising, that there are vacancies at such and such a location. They are working with social workers in the area, making known that there are units available at such and such an address. They have even contacted the Department of Health, letting them know that there is availability of certain units in certain areas. We have put ads, from what I understand, in the seniors' papers, which has proven to be very beneficial in getting inquiries to move into our units. We have also put into the neighbourhood papers an ad with this marketing team. There have been personal solicitations in the neighbourhood by this team in trying to accommodate people to move into the units.

It has become almost a full-court press in a sense of trying to get people involved with moving into our social housing. It is proving to be quite beneficial. As I say, I compliment the teams and the success of it. Now we are looking at even expanding that team. So it shows that there is good initiative there, and we are getting some positive results out of it.

**Ms. Cerilli:** The last part of my question in that area was the plan then for the developments that are really more complex in their problems and probably going to be more difficult. Perhaps the strategy that the minister has described worked to some extent, but when we look at Lord Selkirk Park and some of those other developments that I listed earlier, that strategy will not be enough. I am wondering, you know, what is the cost to the Housing Authority and the department, of having those vacancies continue over the years for those developments, like Lord Selkirk Park, I think now is almost 50 percent vacant, so I guess again I got a two-part question.

I am wanting to find out the strategy for those kind of areas and if that has been given any attention as of yet

and to look at what the losses have been. Someone has actually suggested to me that when there are vacancies in some of these units—and I am not sure if they are meaning with public housing or with some of the social housing, the sponsored nonprofits—the department may not necessarily be losing money by not filling the suites because then they are not having to pay a subsidy. So I am wondering if you can clarify that as well.

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that the range of question that the member brought up is worthy of a fair amount of discussion in a sense, because I share with her the concern that to have good public housing, one of the very first components and one of the very primary components of it, because we are dealing, to a large extent, with seniors, is the fact of community safety. And, if there is community safety or a sense of safety within a community, seniors will feel comfortable into moving into that area and being part of our public housing portfolio. The one area that the member mentioned, Selkirk Park, there is no doubt about it, that area is going to need some sort of special consideration or certain considerations or possibly even a redirection of how we collect rent or how we charge rent in that area, because it is becoming a very difficult place to fill with people that have got a sense of community. Somehow we have got to work closer with that community in trying to bring a resolve on it, not only in Lord Selkirk Park, but there are other areas that hopefully we do not develop that same type of situation.

I think the member and I share the same concerns in trying to get tenant associations involved with that. I know she and I have had some good discussions on that and I agree with her almost 100 percent in what she has mentioned as to the viability and the direction that should come through the tenants association. We will have to spend more time, I think, in trying to foster that type of climate and co-operation in some of these areas. It may mean that we have to direct our resource person to be more actively involved in recognizing some of the problems there. We have to work closely—I am fortunate that through my other portfolio as Minister of Urban Affairs I have the availability of funding the program through the Winnipeg Development Agreement and the Urban Safety program. We have initiated one phase in Selkirk Park with the community police patrol in there. I think that is a very positive

force. I think that that is just one step of somehow we have to build further into that community for the safety aspect and the fact that we can utilize better resources of the asset base in that community. As to the fact that if a unit is vacant it does not cost us anything, there is still a cost in any type of vacancy because of the fixed costs that are associated with those units. I guess it is like anything. It breeds itself into further decay and further misuse. If there are continual vacancies in units, the attitude of living in that particular complex or participation in that particular complex by the tenants becomes less of an appeal.

It does cost us. There is a social cost involved with the monetary costs. I think we in our department recognize that if you have a strong social element in your unit, like as has been referred to in Gilbert Park and in The Maples development, there are no vacancies there. That is only because there is a sense that people want to be in those areas and that they will move into those areas.

Other areas of high-concentrated vacancies, I believe we have to give maybe some added emphasis in any type of marketing and maybe a different type of marketing. At the same time, I think that we can try to overcome those. I look forward to working with the Lord Selkirk Park Tenants Association. Anybody really in that particular area, if they have ideas, my door is open and I certainly would welcome suggestions as to how we can try to accommodate more people living in Lord Selkirk Park. I think that it behooves us to try to be innovative in our approach to getting these units occupied.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I know that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) wants to ask some questions in this area. I know some of these, particularly Flora Place, which is on the list here for having a very high vacancy rate, is in his constituency. He has been involved with some of the other initiatives at Lord Selkirk Park.

I just want to emphasize, what I am getting at here is, if we can compare the cost to the department in the vacancies at Fred Tipping and Carriage Road and some of the other properties you have listed on Marion where you are going to start trying to fill the vacancies, as compared to the cost of having the vacancies in these other larger, high density where there is a greater

number of vacancies, what do we come up with? What kind of picture are we getting?

\* (1640)

Perhaps what you are doing now is, you are trying to fill the vacancies in areas where you are more likely to have success through the kind of marketing approach you have tried now, and you know that it is going to take a lot more money, resources, effort to fill the vacancies at Lord Selkirk Park.

If in fact what is happening is, those are the areas that are really causing losses in terms of revenue and costing you in terms of the high turnover of tenants and all that to the department, should we not be looking at a strategy now that is going to address those higher vacancies, larger complexes? You can respond to that.

Again, I am just wanting you to be a little bit more specific then about the strategy that you would be using with Lord Selkirk Park. We talked generally about having more tenant associations, community groups. I know there have been various proposals to have different kinds of resource centres run out of Lord Selkirk Park. This is an area that does involve, as you have said, community safety issues, a lot of other economic education. It is going to have to be, I think, a lot more involved strategy than what you have used at Fred Tipping Place and Carriage Road.

**Mr. Reimer:** There is not too much that I disagree with the member. I think those are the same concerns that I know I have expressed to the department in trying to come to some sort of resolve in looking at Selkirk Park. I can only relate regarding the marketing team in the sense that you like to build upon the successes, and, granted, Fred Tipping Place and some of those other places are in a totally different location and locale, but I guess it is like anything.

You build upon your successes. If we can build successes, and we can build a record of achievements, we not only build upon the accomplishments of occupancy, but we also build upon the team of experience and the team of innovation. That is something that I think is starting to come out of this marketing team, the fact that they have been able to point to successes, to point to ways that they have

become successful. There is a degree of confidence. There is a degree of forward thinking that they can take forth, take with them, as they start to get into the tougher areas and the more areas that deserve more and more attention, and more hard decisions to be made, or maybe new innovative ways to do it.

So it is a building up of confidence; it is a building up of successes through some of the other areas. We will be approaching the very tough areas that were pointed out, like Lord Selkirk Park and some of the other areas, and try to come to some resolve on it. I would feel very comfortable in working with a team that already sort of got the successes behind it, got the ability to have confidence in making decisions so that when we start to move towards Lord Selkirk Park and areas like that, that these people will be able to come up with some very innovative and creative ways of making decisions. So it is a good process that we started with.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to ask some questions about Lord Selkirk Development and Flora Place. I have lived and worked in the north end for 17 years, so I know a little bit about Lord Selkirk. I certainly do not blame the current government for the problems there. We know that there is a long history to developments like this and that I believe it was when Paul Hellyer was the federal Minister of Housing that he toured large-scale housing projects like Lord Selkirk and Gilbert Park, and found there were many problems. As a result, CMHC said they were not going to fund large-scale projects like that any more because of the problems. So we are really dealing with a legacy that goes back many, many years, policy decisions that at the time were thought to be good, but in the long run did not work out.

I have heard that originally about 75 percent of the people living in Lord Selkirk were employed, and only about 25 percent on social assistance. Now my guess is there is probably very close to 100 percent of the people on social assistance. It seems to me, or my analysis of the problem is, that I think the problem is RGI, rent geared to income. If people who are on social assistance get a job and their income goes up, then of course their rent goes up. When the rent in public housing becomes higher than what it is in the private rental market, people tend to move out fairly

quickly because they can get cheaper, more affordable housing in the private sector. The result is that we have a lack of sense of community and lack of stability and high turnovers, in addition to all the other problems like violence and certain characteristics of the neighbourhood.

I am wondering if you and your department would consider making an exception for Lord Selkirk, and maybe Lord Selkirk and Gilbert Park, on the rent-g geared income policy. So, for example, if people's rent did not go up, or did not go up higher than the private rental market, so that they could continue to stay, people could actually raise a family there, or grow old there, instead of having such a very high turnover rate, which I am sure it can be confirmed from your stats and from the school in the neighbourhood, which has a very high turnover rate of students.

I think there would be benefits to the government and to taxpayers. We know, for example, that when children move twice or more in an academic year, their chances of failing are very, very high. Winnipeg School Division No. 1, for example, has a program whereby they hire staff to follow teachers, and take their work from one school to another, so there is some continuity. We know that children who move many, many times experience many other problems in their life, so if we could provide some stability to that community, I think it would actually save the government money. Basically, my question is, would you consider making an exception to the RGI rule for people who are renting at Lord Selkirk?

**Mr. Reimer:** The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) brings up a very interesting and a very excellent scenario regarding the conditions of some of our public housing. Gilbert Park is an excellent example where you have people there that what you are trying to do is create a housing complex, if you want to call it, that will provide not only for the safety of the community, but it also will give the ability for role models to be developed within that complex for people who exceed, excel and become employable and work are not penalized for their achievements. It is that type of role model that will encourage other people in that area, I refer to Gilbert Park. They see the benefits of getting out and working and providing for themselves, and that is something that maybe we should be

encouraging more in a way and how we can make accomplishments on that.

We have looked at that scenario, and we have started a pilot project at Columbus Courts where we are looking at, what we call, market rent. I think that this is more or less what the member is referring to if we went to a market rent scenario in, say, Gilbert Park or Lord Selkirk Park, that we can build upon that.

Where my restrictions come in and where I would have to come up with some sort of innovative proposal or project scenario is trying to sell this idea to my federal counterparts, because they are our partners in these units. I think that the timing is right that we pursue this even further. Because of the conditions electorally or what we are faced with right now, this is an innovative way to try to encourage staying in the complex. It also provides an opportunity for role modelling to come about. It also gives the opportunity for the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to be part of some of these things, because the Gilbert Park and, I believe, The Maples complex is in his riding where this type of scenario can be of great benefit.

\* (1650)

I have no problems in making this type of initiative to my federal counterparts in a project-by-project basis, because I think that we have a good example in Gilbert Park where we should encourage people of accomplishment, that they are not penalized because of the fact that they cannot compete rent-wise because of our formula. If we can go to some sort of scenario of market rent and there is a willingness by my federal counterparts to recognize what our end product and achievement is in regarding the social wealth and the social benefit of having a stronger and a more vibrant community, we should pursue this even more.

Selkirk Park, if that was the solution to encouraging Selkirk Park to achieve, I think that there is a lot of room for that. The effectiveness of places like Gilbert Park, The Maples complex, some other of our areas are places maybe where it is time we look at those in a pilot project and expand this. So I will take forth the member's recommendation, and I will get the department to look at a proposal or to come up with a scenario. We will make some inquiries to our federal counterparts. It is apropos that the member for Inkster



(Mr. Lamoureux) is here, because he should be aware of that type of proposal so that he could work with his federal MP in the area to recognize what we are trying to do, not only in Selkirk Park but in Gilbert Park, so that there is awareness of the scenario that we might try to bring forth.

We have to do something with those complexes. I agree wholeheartedly with the member that we have to do something with that particular area of Winnipeg in trying to accommodate the conditions at Selkirk Park. It is an excellent way to look at it.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, and to compliment the minister, out of all the different ministers, I find this is the one which I compliment the most. I know I was at Gilbert Park earlier today. In fact they gave me a yellow envelope which I am going to provide to you right after the committee. I think that if you were running in Gilbert Park, you might get more votes than me, quite potentially. So heaven forbid you decide Gilbert Park becomes a part of your area, the minister's area. I respect in terms of what it is the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and the minister are saying in terms of the level of income and allowing people to remain in the complexes. If there are some things that I can do, I definitely will. I can assure you that I will be definitely working with Judy after the next federal election—

**An Honourable Member:** Whichever Judy gets elected.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Whichever Judy it will be, and the federal government to ensure that they have the same attitude that this particular minister has.

I sincerely mean that the minister has done exceptionally well in working in the area of Gilbert Park. That is not necessarily coming from me. As I say, we had a meeting earlier today, and I think the tenants association is very appreciative in terms of the attention that the minister has given that, and I know they do look forward to the continual co-operation into the future. I know from previous encounters with other Housing ministers, even though they have been somewhat co-operative, you have definitely given good attention, attention, I would ultimately argue, that is deserved for an area in which we do want to see people

taking more of that management. Having said that, I appreciate the member for Burrows allowing me to just get on the record.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, I am pleased to hear that the Minister of Housing will negotiate with CMHC and see if we can extend the kind of market rent arrangements that are currently in place, I guess, at Columbus Courts and other places on a project-by-project basis, and the minister has agreed to look into it for Gilbert Park and Lord Selkirk. I am wondering if at Lord Selkirk the tenants have been or are being given a more important role?

My understanding of the reason that a lot of units have been filled up at Gilbert Park is because a tenants association was involved in tenant selection and also evictions, and it seems to me, I have been told, that is one of the reasons that they have been more successful in, I guess, getting better tenants and keeping tenants. I am wondering if the tenants association is going to be given that kind of a role at Lord Selkirk as well?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that it is very, very beneficial that the more that the tenants association has a direct responsibility for their own community and the direction that they want to take their community in a sense of participation, I am a great believer in delegating the authority to them, you know, and we have delegated budgetary responsibility to Gilbert Park in maintenance and cleanup and other things. It is like anything. You build upon successes. They have shown that they can be successful, and I will continue to do that with that association or any other association.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, in I guess a future Estimates committee for Housing, I will have questions about Flora Place, such as how many vacancies, what the government's plans are, any organizations that you might be negotiating with or have accepted proposals from. So I will just put that on the record and give you a chance to do your homework.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The time being five o'clock, committee rise.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come

to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Natural Resources. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. Thank you.

We are on Resolution 12.3 Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (3) Water Planning and Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,036,800. Shall the item pass?

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Yesterday, at the end of our discussions on Estimates, we were dealing with the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer, and I had asked some questions on some concerns that had been raised on the amount of water in the aquifer and the amount that was being replenished as opposed to the amount that was being drawn out.

What I would like to concentrate on just for a few minutes is the quality of the water within that aquifer. I would like to ask the minister whether the department can produce any kind of a study indicating whether there is a problem with the quality of the water, whether there are contaminants present within the water to any extent that the people of the area should be worried about. Is there a study suggesting any problems with the water quality at all in the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer?

\* (1440)

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Chairman, two points. On the question about volumes, first of all, that was asked yesterday and I provided some general answers. It just happens that I have a report here from Assiniboine Delta Aquifer management study, their publication, which says that the average annual supply, use in summary, amount available for development is 109,000 acre-feet. The sustainable use limit that has been imposed by government, which, I guess, would be the way to characterize that, is 51,000 acre-feet; the current amount licensed for use is 23,500 acre-feet; and the actual annual use is 16,000 acre-feet. So you could, in rough terms, indicate that about a third of the sustainable use limit is actually being used today. That is a publication from the Assiniboine Delta River Management Advisory Board under Mr. Ball. So

it is that type of information that leads me to say with some confidence that we are not approaching the level of sustainability on the aquifer. That does not mean to say that there might not be regions of the aquifer, ongoing concerns on the part of a number of people to make sure we stay on top of the issue, so that in fact we never damage the sustainability of that aquifer.

On the second question about quality, the Department of Natural Resources does not have any studies available on the water quality. I know there were some studies done across Manitoba, not specifically on the aquifer, on water quality that were reported to the Department of Environment, and we may be able to provide some information. But, obviously, the water quality is of concern to the aquifer users as well. The irrigation association is very conscious of the need to maintain the quality and the quantity, as if this is their lifeblood, when you have got the investment of hundreds of thousands on to millions of dollars' worth of investment in agricultural production that is based on irrigation.

But, as I said yesterday, a more immediate concern is the washing down of nutrients, and that is where the aquifer users will want to be vigilant. On top of that, there is a blind study that was done in order to have information gathered quickly and professionally but without attribution to where the source may have been in order to get an overview in various parts of the province. There is a concern that some of the heavy livestock production units, if they do not distribute their waste appropriately, could contribute to fertilizer or nutrients like nitrates from their waste getting down to a depth that cannot be retrieved. So it was always the view of the Department of Environment and the people in the field that anybody—and I have since encountered professional agronomists who are serving on behalf of private sector to individual operators—who have provided advice on managing their affairs, so that they do not expose themselves to that liability. In fact, that could be a significant environmental liability.

**Mr. Struthers:** I certainly believe, though, that there is never a shortage of information, that information actually empowers people to make good decisions. It allows the people who are living in the area some kind of comfort in knowing all the facts, all the information they possibly can about the aquifer that they live on. I

am certain that people in the area—I know I am glad to hear that about a third of the total of the aquifer is in use. I would want to ask, though, of the minister what the time span of that study was that says that there is a third of the aquifer in use. He did not mention a date on the study that he had said. Was that up to date as of this year? Is that back over several years? What was the time span of the study that monitored the water that is in the aquifer?

**Mr. Cummings:** I am reading from a report, information that was provided to the study group on March 3 that consider the aquifer a single entity. It can be seen as a combination of 13 sub-basins, each with its own characteristics. At 16,000 acre-feet per year, current water use from the aquifer as a whole is only about 30 percent of total available for licensing, that being 51,000 acre-feet. The amount of water available for licensing is determined by sub-basin and, in four sub-basins, the amount currently committed is at or in excess of the licensing unit. So that was my reference to the sub-basin issue.

Of course, the quantifying of the sub-basins is ongoing to make sure that that sustainable yield is correct, but remember, the sustainable yield is less than half of the estimated yield. In other words, we have given ourselves a 50 percent sleeve to make sure, as the former M.P. for that area, who was very much in the middle of this debate, used to say—Charlie Mayer, obviously—you cannot stick your head down there and have a look and see what is down there. On the other hand, when you see wells with 12-inch casings that can make a 150 horsepower motor work and deliver water at a tremendous rate, you know that there is a very accessible source of water and very valuable resource there. It is up to us to make sure we manage it correctly.

It should be remembered that all of the allocation is not being used either. About 70 percent of our irrigated land is in the aquifer as well, but almost all of the heavy licensed water users are for irrigation purposes. So that also puts in context the importance of the aquifer and the importance of maintaining it. The Spruce Woods Park, of course, is part of that natural region as well, but that is not where the majority of the heavy industrial irrigation is going on.

**Mr. Struthers:** The concerns that have come to me in this area, having to deal with this aquifer, were that at some point we are not going to have an aquifer there to sustain the activities that are in the area. The number that was tossed to me was that it was projected that there was a 50-year lifespan for this aquifer.

Now, I am not going to pretend at all to be some kind of an expert in the area, but it seems to me that if you measure the amount of water going into the aquifer, if you have an idea of what is in the aquifer now and how much is being drawn out, then you may be able to make the projection on the lifetime of an aquifer. And my hope is that there is enough going into the aquifer to make it so that the lifespan question becomes irrelevant, that there is going to be enough water going into the aquifer for in perpetuity, that we would never get to the stage where we use too much of that water. The question becomes a question of rate. Are we taking out more water than what we are putting into the aquifer?

**Mr. Cummings:** I do not want to harangue the member from Dauphin, but—

**An Honourable Member:** Go right ahead.

\* (1450)

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, no, I will be gentle. We have just finished explaining the principles of sustainability on this aquifer, and I think he heard me, but he wants to put on the record concerns that have been brought to his attention, because he surely does not believe what he just put on the record. Either that or he does not believe what I said. And he is correct. If we adhere to a plan that quantifies the sustainable yield of this aquifer, then it is a limitless resource, provided we continue to have snowfall and rainfall. That is the other reason why there is a sleeve. There will be fluctuations in an aquifer, particularly one that drains. This aquifer is an elevated aquifer which makes it very unique. In fact, whether you use the water or not, it is going to run out of the aquifer. I had a little trouble with that concept, the first understanding of it. The simplest concept, as I understand it, is to look at the elevation of the aquifer and look at the known depth. Then look at Pine Creek, Boggy Creek, numerable other creeks that run out along the edges of the aquifer.

In fact, they normally do not quit running ever, 365 days of the year, but during drought periods, and during the period of time when irrigation was beginning to be implemented in the aquifer, a lot of people confused or connected—I withdraw the word confused—a lot of people connected the two. I do not think it was necessarily correct. Nevertheless, they connected the idea that some of these streams were beginning to reduce their flows, recalling however that we have just come through a significant drought cycle, and recalling as well, opposite to what we have this year, that you had vegetation growing for—I should not say when things will green up this year—but in the fall, for example, to use the example to follow it through, a term I had never heard until we began debating the aquifer out in my area, but the evapotranspiration that is caused by the vegetation takes out hundreds of millions of gallons of water daily, weekly if you will. The volume is measured by those who understand aquifers. I should not try and put a figure on how much goes out daily. The fact is, these streams in many cases start to run again in the fall when the leaves come off the trees. I think that helps to substantiate the issue.

In terms of the sustainability, and I know no other way to repeat this unless the member, as some people do, chooses not to believe the quantification that has been done on this aquifer, then he can say the sky is falling, she is going to blow away again. In my view, it will not.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairperson, first of all, I appreciate the minister for being gentle. At the same time, my point is not just to put the concern of people on the record, which is part of what we do in this House, as well. Further than that is to make sure that we understand that one of the factors in any aquifer is the amount of water that you draw out, the amount of water that you use. What prompted my question was the increased usage of the water in this particular aquifer.

The minister, I think, knows that what we have been talking about are the factors that come into play in determining the lifespan of any aquifer anywhere. One of the factors that I want people to consider, and most of all the Department of Natural Resources to consider, is the factor of overuse of our water supply. We are very lucky people to be living in Canada where there is

so much water. We also have to be absolutely vigilant in the way we use that resource.

So, Mr. Chairperson, I just want to make sure that the usage aspect of management of an aquifer is taken into consideration. I want to make sure that we are concerned about the contaminants that flow into these aquifers because that has an effect on volume as well, because you cannot use the water that is subsequently infected with contaminants from the outside world, whether they be nutrients or whatever.

If the minister can provide me any information as to the sources, I know he has touched upon this a bit, but I would like to know more detailed sources of where contaminants are coming from on this particular aquifer.

**Mr. Cummings:** Perhaps I can add some further information to the record that will give the member some comfort. Interestingly enough, the more that knowledge has been gathered about this aquifer in the last few years, it has actually caused the department to raise the level of acre-feet that they believe are available under sustainable yield. So, again, unless he chooses not to accept the information that is being gathered, there should be some increased level of confidence in what is being allocated within the aquifer.

The aquifer is about 1,500 square miles which is quite significant. It contains about 12 million acre-feet of water, and recharge, of course, would be from rainfall and snow melt. As I indicated earlier, there is no way you can get water into the elevated aquifer from a stream. Ninety percent of that precipitation is lost to evapotranspiration—that is the word I was trying to say earlier—but 10 percent then enters and eventually discharges annually as stream flow.

In many respects, it could be argued that, while the rate of flow is very slow, you are interrupting some of the stream flows to use this water for irrigation, but on that point alone, I have been at an irrigation site that is essentially a stream and a bog that sits in the middle of the aquifer. At that particular site, the irrigator did not have to sink a well. There was a little pothole there, with no bigger diameter than this room, in which he irrigates 24 hours a day. Essentially he is pumping off

the top of the aquifer. There is a depression in the sand cap there, or the aquifer sand pile, if you will, there, and the way I understand it, that has got to be the top of the aquifer. That is the level. It comes up that high, and then it runs off or just sits there. But he can run and irrigate three quarter sections of that land from that one sitting of his pump. If he goes a little further over—we have to go up the hill—then, of course, he is dropping a well down 150 feet to locate a pump deep enough in the aquifer. It is an amazing resource.

The member's comment about let us not degrade it is very accurate, and one which, I believe, will be the next level of research that needs to occur on the aquifer. A lot of people would argue that instead of using surface water, as we are for some communities, we should simply be going back into the aquifer and sinking a well. You have all of the filtering effect of a natural aquifer to provide very good water.

There are contaminants that will occur naturally, however, that may be as a result of pumping. There are some quadrants of the aquifer apparently in which there can be some iron found. That, of course, is not very desirable and is quite a pollutant for domestic use. For someone who has a water softener and an iron filter in his basement, I can attest how costly it is to deal with iron in water. Generally speaking, for commercial uses in a town or village, it is too costly.

\* (1500)

So this leads me to the next figure; the estimate is that there are about 166,000 acre-feet that are discharged annually out of the aquifer. This was done as a result of a three-year study that was completed last year in March. This is the basis upon the 50 percent increase from the 1987 estimates of the available yield in the aquifer. About 109,000 acre-feet out of that total of 166,000 average annual discharge is available in irrigable areas. Local ground water availability and usage vary within those various sub-basins, an allocation of 50 percent replenishment rate over irrigable areas within 11 of the sub-basins, and a limit of 15 percent has been applied to two other sub-basins.

So all of this, I think, points towards a pretty good body of knowledge about the aquifer and the possibilities that are associated with it. Interestingly

enough, some of the land that was situated over top of the aquifer was probably some of the least productive soils in that area. Again, from personal experience, I know how poorly some of it would produce, primarily because it was easy to erode.

The fact is you talk about the modern man destroying the resources that we have, or we tend to think that is always the norm, when this land was subject to prairie fires there probably was very little other than a bit of grass that burned off. Certainly, according to what we believe and what studies would tend to prove, there was very little vegetation that grew on this site. Therefore, it blew, it eroded and everything else. When people came to the Prairies and settled the Prairies and the prairie fires were eventually eliminated, that is when this area began to get treed over, and that is when the evapotranspiration would have begun to use the water in the aquifer, before it ran out. But now, of course, people are criticized for clearing those same trees off the land so they can return it to possibly potatoes or whatever other product they want to produce under irrigation.

So it is very unique, very fragile. People who farm on that area are well aware of that. Not only are there those poor lands that I refer to, there are also some lands that are heavier and are still over a good portion of the aquifer, and they are extremely valuable soils. In fact, the highest assessed soils in the school division in that area are located over top of the aquifer. So it is not all of poorer quality. There is also some exceptionally high quality soil.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before we proceed, may I bring to the attention of the honourable members the gallery where we have with us today three students from Thompson and one student from Finland who are part of the Operation World Scholarship. This is in the constituency of the opposition House leader, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). On behalf of all honourable members, we thank you.

**Mr. Struthers:** The figures that the minister just read into the record on the annual discharge were exactly what I was looking for when I first started asking these questions. I appreciate him giving those to me. What I was not clear on, though, was that the figures that he gave me on the annual discharge of 166,000 feet, is that

from the same study that he referenced before by the Assiniboine Delta, or was that a different group?

**Mr. Cummings:** They are all the same figures. Assiniboine Delta management study was incorporating the figures that I extrapolated from my briefing notes as well. Remember that what they said was there were 109,000 acre-feet available for development. Of that we are only using 16,000 acre-feet. The aquifer is far, far larger than that, but some of it is simply not suitable for development, probably because of depth and quality—I am not sure.

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

3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (3) Water Planning and Development (b) Other Expenditures \$118,600—pass; (c) Waterways Maintenance \$3,834,700—pass. 3. (a)(4). Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$688,100.

**Mr. Struthers:** Surface Water Management. As I was looking through the Estimates book, I came across a reference to communities that are flood prone, and I took it from there that there is a list of flood-prone communities that have been designated. According to this information that I have in front of me, there are 16 flood-prone communities. I am wondering if I could have the minister indicate to me which communities those would be. If he has a list, maybe he could have it sent to me at some point, but I would like to know that information.

**Mr. Cummings:** We can supply the names of those communities that were referenced there, but I am pretty sure this would include a list that is as simple as situations that would include Brandon and Winnipeg, which are the obvious large ones. I think I may have—in fact, I do have the names here. Flood Damage Reduction Plan, here we go: Arborg, Brandon, Carman, Dauphin, Elie—in fact, Dominion City, which is on the verge of being flooded, potentially being flooded this year—could make that list swell to 17—Fisher Branch, La Salle, Lorette, Melita, Neepawa—now that is only the low parts, obviously—Riverton, Sanford, Souris, Starbuck, Swan River, Wawanessa, and Winnipeg.

I think the difference here between the list that I just gave the member and the reason that places like

Dominion City are not on it is that there are different levels of status for where flood reduction programs have been in place. Those are the communities where the flood reduction programs are in place. There is also a list of risk areas that may be yet designated. That includes part of Gladstone, MacGregor, Minnedosa, Morden, The Pas, and Virden. Not areas that you normally hear of flooding, but MacGregor had a bad event last year, and Minnedosa has some low-lying property, but not others. Not designated and no plans for designation, and so on. There is quite a list of various statuses, and this is useful to know for communities. This is probably, I think, information that is directly related to EMO, and having permanent structures in place, or something that is known on an annual basis that can be protected and put in place.

Basically, what it does is give the department an overview of the potential risk and damage, and certainly tie that to flood predictions which are now available. The new flood prediction levels would allow people, frankly, within a very short period of time, to designate where they have to concentrate their energy.

**Mr. Struthers:** I notice that these are communities, I believe, towns. Do R.M.s not have a list, or are they designated as flood-prone areas at all? Is this just strictly towns, urban?

**Mr. Cummings:** This lists communities as opposed to R.M.s. R.M.s have plans where they have difficulties as well. You are looking at individual properties there more than communities. The other purpose for which this list is put together is to assist with planning. When I saw my hometown of Neepawa on the list, you noticed I paused for a moment. There is a low-lying part of the town that used to be subject to flooding, but there are very few houses located there now. Those that are there have been elevated, I believe. I know that there are people wanting to develop down in that flood plain, but they are going to have to put in six or eight feet of fill before they even think about laying a street.

**Mr. Struthers:** Who makes the decision and what criteria are used to establish a flood-prone community?

\* (1510)

**Mr. Cummings:** I am reminded of a friend of mine who was complaining about not having any water in his

well. He was at a public hearing, and somebody asked him, how did he know he had no water in his well? He said, I took the lid off and I looked. That is pretty much the simple answer for whether or not you have got a flood plain. These communities, in conjunction with Natural Resources, the list I gave you, have actually developed a plan. There are others where we know there are floods that occur, but they do not have a plan yet that is registered and known in advance to everybody. It is really done in conjunction with known water levels. We are responsible, the department is responsible, for keeping track of levels, and giving that information to a local council, and then a plan evolves if they are desirous of it.

**Mr. Struthers:** I would assume that the local history of the amount of times you are up to your eyeballs in water in a certain community would maybe suffice as a criterion. I also understand that there may arise situations where a community wants to be designated as a flood-prone community. Then somebody in the Department of Natural Resources or Emergency Management or some place would have to say yes or no. That is what I was after. Who makes the decisions on whether they are designated or not?

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes, it has worked out with provision of information and discussion with council whether or not they would be considered a flood-prone area. But remember that list that I gave the member, is Winnipeg flood-prone? Most people would say, well, it is protected by the floodway, but not every part of the city is protected by the floodway. Therefore, it is still classified.

A moment ago my question to myself was, so why is Ste. Rose not on there? We have got a ring dike around Ste. Rose. In fact, all of the urban properties are inside the ring dike, and they manage their own affairs there. If that is where the member is heading, which he might be because that is an area he is also familiar with, the criterion for federal-provincial funding to put in a diking structure, for example, is based on a cost-benefit analysis. That happened with the Carman by-pass as well. It is pretty difficult to get that tripartite funding, frankly, these days. Carman is, I believe, the last one that was done on tripartite funding.

**Mr. Struthers:** As I listen to the answers that the minister gives me, I keep coming up—as I think he is

doing, thinking of Ste. Rose—with different examples of towns, and I wonder why they are not on the list, too. A couple that spring to mind are Morris and Selkirk, and maybe there are logical reasons for why those two communities are not on it. I know that Selkirk is, I think, quite wisely listed as an area where you have an office set up for this year's flood.

I am wondering why those two communities, for example, are not on there. I realize we could get into this all afternoon coming up with different names of different towns, but it seemed to me that those two were a little more obvious than some of the others. I will just leave it at that for a minute.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, I may have mischaracterized one of the reasons why this list is put together when I said that you look at the water level and you decide whether or not it is flood prone, but another reason is to provide advice on where people should build based on the probability of flooding.

The member referenced Morris and Selkirk. Morris is, in fact, referenced but not on the list that I indicated to the member. Morris is not designated as having flood risk and has no plans to be designated. When you look at the ring dike around Morris, you would say what is the poop. It would sure be flooding around there if they did not have the ring dike. The fact is you close the dike, and I guess the probability of protection is high. They do not have a flood problem inside the ring dike.

So do not put too much importance on this. I am not sure of the question, however, when you said how do you get on the list or what good does it do you getting on the list. Well, one of the benefits that come from it is that if you want to build in the flats of Selkirk—the town of Selkirk is not subject to flooding, and I am not sure about the flats along the river. That may not be considered a community. I cannot answer that portion.

There seems to be some pretty obvious reasons why portions of these other communities are designated, but the other aspect is that there has to be a balance where they have to want to be designated, for that matter.

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, my colleague for Selkirk who asked some questions the other day and also hosted a

meeting up in the area in Selkirk was giving some people up there who were very worried about the flood an opportunity to talk with a lot of folks in Water Services and in Emergency Measures, and they were very concerned about the flood situation. That is why Selkirk just kind of popped into my mind as to why they would not be listed on that list.

Maybe what I would like to get from the minister is, is there a listing of criteria that they follow, or is there—I am just trying to think of what, and he partly answered this question last time as well, is what the benefits are getting onto that list, a full account of what a town like, say, Selkirk could gain by being put on this list.

I am certain that the folks in Selkirk would just rather not be on the list and not have flooding problems at all, but they are going to get flooded year after year. Recent history tells us they are going to get flooded. Looks like they will again this year. They are talking about all kinds of ideas about hovercrafts and drilling holes in the ice to weaken the ice jams, and then I realize that they are not on this list. Can the minister explain to me why East Selkirk would not be on the list?

**Mr. Cummings:** Two or three aspects why it is likely that they are not listed as an area that is developing a plan. Part of it is that it is a little hard to develop a plan that addresses unpredictable ice jams. The other thing that I think the member might find, if you check the attendees at the meetings around Selkirk, was that these were rural and R.M.-located. They were not the townfolk. They were in the rural areas around Selkirk who felt their properties were at risk for being flooded. I am not sure where the property line is at, where the town line is at Selkirk, so I am quite prepared to be corrected on that. But, when you look at the history of where the ice jams have caused damage, it has not been in the town site. The museum that received damage there last year, I believe, would say that maybe that was one of the first times it had ever been in that area. That was predicated by the ice jam. It could be somewhere else further down another time, as I understand the nature of the ice jams.

\* (1520)

It goes also back to the responsibility of local communities in terms of what can they do to in terms of

flood protection. One of the aspects of this is to make sure that the number of areas where regular damage occurs is identified and also make sure that there is an opportunity for local people to have input into what should occur. I do not think anybody has been suggesting to build a dike along whatever the number of miles along the side of the Red near Selkirk, but it has been primarily the ice jam concern. I can see why some of that property would be quite prone to flooding. Some of it is quite high, but some of it is quite low. I guess that raises the question for a lot of people, which is about the concern of building in a flood plain. The whole Red River Valley can flood. We understand that from last year and other years, but there are also areas where communities have traditionally built up that are flood prone and they either have got to have a permanent work in place to protect them or have some other means. All that speaks—some of these communities have been much more active in terms of what they are concerned about with flooding.

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

I mean Brandon is on the list as a risk-area designation, and they have indicated that their study is complete. All those flats in Brandon is still prone to flooding. The soccer fields were 10 feet deep down in the flats, but they, I do not believe, had very much housing that was subject to flooding. Some of the houses that I remember used to flood in the Brandon plain ran on flats are either protected or no longer there.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairperson, I am interested in getting a better idea on what, being on this designation as a flood-prone community, does that entitle the town to, if anything. Is it tied to compensation at all, or is it any special consideration in any way?

**Mr. Cummings:** It is simply a tool to identify areas. It is not a criterion for any programs that we or anybody else runs. Obviously, people can use this information in any way they want, though, once they get it.

**Mr. Struthers:** Just to switch gears a little bit. Many of the flooding problems that occurred up in the Parkland area last year or the year before, particularly the year before, got blamed on our Canadian symbol, the beaver.



**An Honourable Member:** Pesky little feller, that beaver.

**Mr. Struthers:** Pesty little fellers. I am wondering if the minister can update me at all on where the stage of the beaver control program is today.

**Mr. Cummings:** Same program; same level of support as last year.

**Mr. Struthers:** What is the process then for the local farmer in my area to go and get a beaver control problem dealt with?

**Mr. Cummings:** They could contact their local Natural Resources officer, and I believe the municipalities are involved in many cases.

**Mr. Struthers:** Is there funding that flows from the department to the R.M.s to help out with this program?

**Mr. Cummings:** The question was the amount of money. The province will support beaver eradication at \$15 a head. The municipality wants to run a program if they cannot get someone to do it at that price. Given the price of fur or given the time of the year, that is all that it would be.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** Moving on to (3) Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (4) Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$688,100—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$371,800—pass; (c) Canada-Manitoba Agreement for Water Quantity Surveys \$302,400—pass; 3.(a)(5) Groundwater Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$555,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$163,900—pass; 3.(a)(6) Computer Graphics (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$452,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$25,000—pass.

Item 3.(b) Parks and Natural Areas (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$385,300.

**Mr. Struthers:** Before we get into a discussion on the parks, Mr. Chair, I just want to get some clarification, maybe from the minister. With the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund—I have the Estimates

book in front of me and maybe you could give me some guidance on this—do we pass the Main Estimates for Natural Resources and then start this separately, or is it all rolled up into one?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** The honourable minister, just for clarification.

**Mr. Cummings:** The administration expenditures are part of this department. The Innovations Fund dollars are technically under the Department of Environment funding. As chairman of the Sustainable Development committee, I can answer questions on this or on other matters related to the fund as well if the member wants to, but this appropriation—I am seeking guidance here—this appropriation number is technically part of the National Resources total appropriation. No? [interjection] It is a separate appropriation, so it can be dealt with separately after passing Natural Resources, I am sorry.

**Mr. Struthers:** Afterwards, when we come back around to Minister's Salary, we get all that done and over with, then we start again with the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. Okay, thanks.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** Perhaps I should point out to the group here that that could be dealt with under the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. Is that correct?

\* (1530)

**Mr. Cummings:** This appropriation, the administration of it is all included within Natural Resources, the dollars for the fund. We do not want to confuse the sustainable development support with the actual fund, which is a block of funding that is included in the funding of the Department of Environment, so we can handle this any way the member and I decide to, but I will not exclude discussion on this whether he passes Department of Natural Resources or not. As long as his House leader agrees, we can proceed on and do this once we finish with the Department of Natural Resources.

**Mr. Struthers:** I assumed that is how we were going to do it, but I thought I had better check anyway just to make sure we do it properly.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** Do we have any further question on that, or do we proceed under—

**Mr. Struthers:** No.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck):** Okay, then we will proceed. Item 3. Resource Programs (b) Parks and Natural Areas (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$385,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$278,000—pass; (c) Grant Assistance \$133,500—pass. Moving on then to 3.(b)(2) Planning and Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairperson, under the area of Planning and Development, I thought it might be appropriate to have a little bit of a discussion on the province's move towards hitting its target that it signed onto through the Brundtland Commission of 1987, I believe, where we committed ourselves to designating 12 percent of the province to green space. Last year when I asked this question in Estimates, if my memory serves me correctly, we were just under the halfway mark to 12 percent. I am wondering and hoping that the minister today can report that we have moved substantially more towards the target of 12 percent, as I believe that it is a good target to move towards, and I think that most Manitobans agree with those of us in the province who are intent on having more of our province set aside for green areas to be enjoyed by all the people of the province. So my questions are, what percent are we at now in terms of our commitment to the Brundtland 12 percent, and what are our plans in the course of the next little while to get even closer to that 12 percent target?

**Mr. Cummings:** As of today, we are at 7 percent. That is a significant move forward; plus we have a plan that was tabled that will allow us to move forward over the immediate future to achieve the balance of our goals. That plan has been tabled.

The fact is that we are well on our way to exceeding the expectations of the World Wildlife Fund in this area. They have been very satisfied with the process and the progress that has been made and how it has unfolded over the last few months. I want to give credit to my predecessor for having brought this program along. Unfortunately, World Wildlife Fund was taking a show-me attitude to the work as it proceeded last year

and indicated that with the measurement that they applied to the province. But I am confident that members opposite will be eating a lot of crow including the feathers this spring when we receive the rating for this coming year.

The fact is that in tabling the plan for the future we now can identify park lands that will increase our designated protected area by about almost 700,000 hectares into protected areas.

**Mr. Struthers:** I can understand that, from a government that has had to eat so much crow over the last few years. They are pretty much experts on that area, issue after issue. If we have to eat crow over anything as important as a 12 percent set-aside of land, then I will not mind doing that.

**An Honourable Member:** You like that with salt?

**Mr. Struthers:** On that one again. I would have to defer maybe to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), who has probably eaten a lot more crow than I have. Maybe he can recommend what I should eat with the crow, what kind of fixings I should have with it?

Would the minister be able to give me some sort of a breakdown of the 7 percent that has already been allocated? Can he tell me where the green spaces have come from and where he intends to get the rest?

**Mr. Cummings:** There is a huge percentage of land that is held in the park system today. Fifty percent of that is now designated under the World Wildlife designation. The lowlands effort that has been discussed will contribute significantly. But remember we are talking about lands all over the province. We are even capable of and will receive designation for a number of wildlife management areas. I guess I was somewhat serious when I asked the member if he read our press releases because, in fact, our park plan, which I do not have in my fingertips and perhaps I should have, lays out the answers to all of those questions. We have laid out the direction and the process.

Remember that one of the reasons this process takes some time is the very criterion the World Wildlife Fund puts on it, which is whether or not there is adequate consultation. It happens that Manitoba has a lot of

native interests in lands that we are designating and sometimes they are not too pleased to see some of this land as designated and restricted access if it happens to be something which they have in mind a different usage for. I do not mean that in a critical sense; I am just reflecting the reality of the process. That will take some time, but we are forging on. By putting out the plan with all the various areas in it, we will be able to show very quickly progress or, if in fact the consultation process for some reason should not go well, lack of progress, but I am confident by fall we will be able to show further progress in the areas that I referenced, because we will be getting the consultation process.

The consultation process when you get into those areas can be time consuming, and it is that very factor that gives us cause for concern in terms of the rate at which we are able to designate these lands. I have been very impressed with the capabilities now for laying out park boundaries in remote areas where we can use global positioning to indicate boundaries in areas that may not have been surveyed and be able to do it very accurately. That is a tremendous asset in and of itself because, if you are into areas where there is potential around development which, perhaps people believe, is available but may not be available for quite some time, you have to be able to accurately define those boundaries, or you are simply going to create a situation where you stay out of an area completely or whether you can accurately display some boundaries. In fact, if staff is listening on the monitor, they will maybe be able to bring down a parks plan, and I will table that for the member.

\* (1540)

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairperson, I have in front of me a schedule in which it names the park and the description, the classification, and the land use category. The minister has stated that 50 percent of our parks fall into the 12 percent that we are looking for if it makes up the 7 percent so far that we have set aside. What I am trying to understand is which of the land use categories make up that 50 percent. In the category of back country, I understand that development is off limits. That would then strictly be found in the 50 percent of the parks that qualify for this green space under the Brundtland Commission.

**Mr. Cummings:** The back country designation would be as the member so described. That is a very specific designation, as he knows.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I think it should be clearly put on the record that to pluck 12 percent out and indicate that that is nirvana, that that is the goal that we are going to have, there is still some discussion within the entire natural resources community, the World Wildlife Fund people. I would indicate, first of all, before I get into this discussion that my relationship since I came to this portfolio has been quite productive with the people from World Wildlife Fund. So this is not intended to have anything more than to context the debate that we are having.

Let us take native prairie grasses as an example. That is the very area that our forefathers went to first with the plow. There is almost none left in Manitoba. Now, if you want 12 percent, you are going to have to start reseeded some of that fairly productive prairie out there to get 12 percent of prairie grass set aside, although we have areas where we are able to do it.

I think there is an area of discussion. In the early stages of this program there was a discussion. I did not have this responsibility at that time, but, as I recall the discussion, we talked about 12 percent of the province, including representative areas of all the various ecosystems within the jurisdiction. That was some people's view of it. Others' view of it was 12 percent of every ecosystem set aside. That is different interpretation from the one I gave earlier. So this is the time in our history to be worrying because, as I pointed out about the prairie grass situation, that is the very time in our history to be making sure that we get on with this designation and set-aside because prairie grass is the absolute example of where we may almost have none left that would be anything close to its original natural state.

But let us then remember that there are huge tracts of land that are available for parks that are under discussion, and they are under protected designation, under protection today for potentially future designation. That is why we are confident that we can achieve a far greater percentage in the next short period of time. But we need to be sure of what is included in

what we are designating, and the other thing is that—and I believe the people representing the World Wildlife organization would agree—we have a much better way of demarcation of what the areas are that really should be protected to represent one of the appropriate representative areas of the various ecosystems out there, the various representative areas that we should have protected.

That, too, changes a little bit of the work—a lot of the work, frankly—that our Parks people are now capable of doing. So it is something that I had not contemplated until I became more familiar with the details of what is being done with our parks' and our natural lands' designations, because there can easily—and even the New Democrats, I think, would respect the concept that there are areas out there where there is potential economic development so that it would be foolish to put ourselves in a situation where future generations might not be able to access that without being seen to be ripping and tearing at what is the very core of setting aside some unique and important areas for preservation.

In fact, because we are capable of better delineation than we were even five years ago, that becomes much more practical. I understand an example is—and I am not as familiar with it as my predecessor—along the Hayes River, a heritage river, but there are also some valuable resources in close proximity, and those areas can now be better designated than they could have been a few years ago. So all of that adds up to significant confidence on my part that we will reach those goals.

**Mr. Struthers:** The land use category called back country then falls under that 50 percent in the parks. Do any of the other categories count towards the set-aside at all, whether they be resource management, recreation development, any of the others—wilderness, I would venture a guess at?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, I still do not have the precise plan in front of me, but there are three areas. Back country, wilderness and natural areas, I believe, are the three that would be eligible in the future.

**Mr. Struthers:** Maybe some more specific questions about some of the specific concerns about specific parks that have come up. Several people contacted me about a road being built between Florence and Nora

Lake, a private road being built in a public park, i.e., the Whiteshell.

Can the minister report whether this is still a matter under consideration? Can he tell me if there has been any money allotted towards this project?

**Mr. Cummings:** There have been no monies allocated. The decision on that is still being discussed by the local advisory committee. There have been further meetings. It did receive a preliminary stamp of approval, I guess for lack of a better word, but further review of it by the local people is being done in the spring. You saw that information recently. No money has been set aside. That project has been around for a number of years. Individuals there have—I think the member is being a little unfair to talk about a private road on public property. You may well end up with a situation where you will have private people paying for a public road.

\* (1550)

**Mr. Struthers:** Would not that be something. Would the money that is allocated—if money is ever flowed to fund this road, would that money come from the Natural Resources department, or would it be something that would be funded by the Department of Highways?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, that area was accessed by rail. I think the member knows that. These people lost their ability to access when the rail line closed. The only way that government would become involved would be for forestry or for safety or for fire purposes.

Remember there are 50-some cottages in there. I think that some of them might be a little concerned about access to emergency health care as well, so there are legitimate reasons for discussion to be going on, but beyond that his question is quite hypothetical.

**Mr. Struthers:** I would like to move on briefly to Winnipeg Beach and talk about condominiums for a little bit.

**An Honourable Member:** Did you buy one?

**Mr. Struthers:** I wish. Recently, the project to build some condominiums in Winnipeg Beach has hit the

papers. It has hit the media. It has been quite controversial. I am sure members on both sides of the House have been contacted and consulted on this issue. I am wondering, first of all, what stage this project is actually at, because there has been a lot of confusion so far as to just what phase the whole project is at right now. So maybe if the minister could update me on exactly where we are with this condominium idea in Winnipeg Beach, I would appreciate that.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, I do not think there should be any confusion. The fact is that there is strong, local support for this project. There are people who own cottages from a distance away who have expressed a concern, and that is why the meetings were held, to hear those concerns. If a development agreement is finalized, they must provide proof of sale of the units and get their financing in place so that the project can proceed. I think it is somewhat unfortunate that the Lions Club has found themselves in this situation.

There are a lot of pros and cons as to what should happen in that particular spot. There are some people who have said that there is a principle here, that once something is behind a park line, that is sort of like the demarcation line that should never change. There was a principle that was put through as part of the multiple use—recognition of multiple use in our parks and the difficulty. This relates back to the earlier discussion we had about how you designate and set aside the various areas for park protection.

I am sure the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and I both think we are pretty smart today. We can tell a century ahead where things should be. Once we have made up our minds where the road is going to go or where the boundary is going to be, anybody who would dispute us, no matter how long we have been dead, would be wrong, and that is one way of looking at park lines. I even tie that back to the park that he and I live on either side of. The federal authorities will not let you take a piece of moss out of the park at Riding Mountain, because it is a pristine park—right? Big chunks of it were logged over before he and I were born, so it is not an original, pristine forest that has been dealt with. Yet I am sure he and I both grew up thinking that Riding Mountain National Park was a pretty nice place—and it is a beautiful place—but it was

not always a park. It was used and maybe abused in some cases, but I think the fact is that that is maybe as good a demonstration of anything as why there is a decent reason to have a process in a place that allows reasonable-thinking people to look at where park boundary designations should be.

The Winnipeg Beach question is an example of where there is a legitimate debate about whether a few acres could be used differently than it is today. Interestingly enough, inside that park boundary and right roughly where this development is to go, is an old railway wye, which mainly means, I guess, some use has been made of it before. It was not always, and it is not today, a pristine natural setting, but it is set aside and designated. It must today go through a process to change that park line. We will tabulate the information that came from the consultation process, and we will take our responsibilities seriously in how we view the concerns that have been raised, both pro and con. There is, I think, a majority, some of the local people who are quite pro. There are other people who have an interest in the area, who consider that their summer home and feel every bit as much pride of ownership in the area, who say that this should not happen.

Let me expand that discussion a little bit. I just met this morning with people who operate services in one of our provincial parks, and their question was, well, are we not a community too? They were there before it was a park. Their businesses were there. They serviced the camp cottaging and camping community. They lived there year-round, and they have desires to see how their community will change. I suggest that this area can be thought of in somewhat the same vein. Does this community— it does, but do you agree that this community should have an opportunity to express a view on how it wants to develop? I know the arguments, well, it could go 200 yards further south and back on the main street perhaps, and maybe that is where it will go in the end, I do not know. The opportunity to develop in what was considered by many people to be a piece of property that might not have to stay in the park is what precipitated this discussion, but we always fool ourselves a little bit when we start using the term “park.”

\* (1600)

I can give the Riding Mountain example. I can also give the example of where we have a business that has been using an area for 15 years, I guess. It is all gravel and oil. Even the Parks workers, when they put the posts along the edge of what they thought was the park line, looked at that and said, well, that cannot be park, but the boundary shows that that chunk of gravel is really in the park. Now what are we going to do with that? We probably should depark it, so that that person can buy it and continue to use it for what it is. Surely reasonable-thinking people would not object to that type of a revision; but, when we talk about changing park lines, it becomes very emotional—and rightfully so. We need to make sure we use rational thinking when we consider what we are talking about when we talk about adjusting a park boundary.

**Mr. Struthers:** I think the minister brings up a lot of things there that are worth discussing and worth considering. I used the word “confusion” because from the history that I have been told about this specific project in this park is that the deal was on at one time, it was off again, it was on again. I think the confusion is coming simply because of that, because it has a history to it. It has been here; it has been there; it has been back and forth.

I do not like to see people’s expectations get all built up and their hopes all built up and then have them fall apart again. If I were in a business community in that part of the world, I would probably be pretty frustrated about that in terms of confusion. I would also be very frustrated as somebody who uses the park out at Winnipeg Beach.

The minister put his finger on a question that I have wondered at ever since I have become aware of this issue: Why are we going to build anything on that particular site when we could build it outside of the park and not have this kind of split in the community or an argument go on, because we are not only talking about that local park? I really get concerned about the bigger issue here in the way we treat our parks generally, and that, of course, springs from my concerns coming out of the proclamation of The Provincial Parks Act not too long ago. I believe it is Section 14 that says you cannot sell, you are prohibited to sell land from within the park, so instead you just go and redraw the boundary and sell that chunk of land

anyway. I understand what the minister is saying when he talks about Riding Mountain and other parks and that they have changed and that you do not have a line absolutely drawn out in the bush some place that is going to remain stagnant until the end of the earth.

The park lines are going to be moving. My preference is that they move to make the parks bigger, but at the same time I do not want to see actions taken by the Department of Natural Resources which simply circumvent their own acts that they bring in. I am afraid that that is what has happened in this case. If I am wrong, I am sure the minister will correct me on it, but I do not want to see the Department of Natural Resources simply drawing boundaries in any of our parks just to get around their own regulations and their own acts.

Mr. Chairman, the other thing that we need to consider is the size of the amount of land that is being drawn out of the park in relation to the size of the park that is already there. I realize that we are dealing with this in an incremental way. First, we are going to be dealing with the condominiums, and then we are going to be dealing with more land in a future development, a future phase. From what I have been told, we are looking at quite possibly up to a quarter of the amount of this provincial park being drawn out, being excluded from the park and used for development. So it is not just the one issue that we are dealing with. I am worried, and I think the minister needs to look down the road as well. Maybe he can shed some light on some of the comments that I have just made.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, I guess there is some advantage at a time like this, although I would say that the worst day in government is better than the best day over there, but it is easy to sit there and ask and be critical of how we are looking at these issues, but the member is reluctant to—he says if you are going to change a park boundary, you should just make it bigger. I am not sure that he would always want to support that unless he, in fact, supports multiple use in our parks.

I mean that is one the reasons that Manitoba has developed—and maybe even the kind of thinking that has helped Manitoba to develop—a park system that it has. In some respects, it creates criticism around the world when people who do not want to treat the issue

fairly say Manitoba allows logging in its parks. I mean, horrors, I get letters from California. You know, they sit alongside the paved-over desert and say, why are you cutting trees in your parks? The fact is that, when we laid down boundaries originally in this province, we drew the boundaries around what were designated cutting areas and we said: There, you guys can continue cutting in there; we are just going to have a little more control over it.

I would argue that those people that made that decision maybe made a very wise decision because they were applying some restrictions on there, but we have 60-some parks and four of them allow logging. Now, there is maybe a reality check that we need to do about how our parks are viewed and how we talk about them. But we sell leases in our parks for people to cottage. Is that how the member believes a development such as this should occur at Winnipeg Beach, a long-term lease? Or is he saying that development should not be there at all? Maybe he does not want to take a position now because he can wait and criticize whichever one this government makes, but that is fair. Well, it is not fair, but it is what is going to happen. The fact is that we have a process under the act that we are going to follow, and I simply have been trying to encourage him to look at it in the bigger picture that this is not the end of parks. This is not the end of opportunity.

However, you must be aware of the frustration that some people have in terms of trying to simply acquire a cottage lease. There are areas of this province that are highly desirable, and we just do not have enough capacity to make leasing available to them yet. That is what we talked about earlier; we will have more lots available. It does not need to be an elitist situation. Manitoba makes very wide use of the cottaging opportunities in this province, and people should have some security. Some people, as he would know, put their life savings into a retirement or a summer home that they may well wish to have in an area that is designated for cottaging within a park setting. We allow them almost all of the rights of ownership through a lease, but ultimately it remains in public hands.

When you relate it to the already gravelled-over piece of a small park that someone with a garage has been using for a number of years and now finds out that

really he has been using a piece of park property, then it makes ultimate good sense that some of that flexibility should be in the act. We would only be creating hardship and probably confusion and difficulty if we were so narrow minded in our decision making.

\* (1610)

I want to put on the record, Mr. Chairman, the question was asked earlier about the park properties that are part of our plan, and there is a proposal for a number of parks. I would expect the member has our park plan and the list of all of the different parks. For example, Amisk Provincial Park has been designated as a park reserve. The designation will be determined after there has been further consultation, but you are looking at almost 2,000 square kilometres of park space in that one area. The Asessippi Park is smaller, but it is designated as a natural park. Another small one, a wilderness, Atikaki, which has almost 4,000 kilometres of park designated as a wilderness park. Birds Hill, small but designated as natural designation, and Baudry Park a natural designation.

There are some significant parks that have been laid out in the development of this plan. The Caribou River park, which would still require some further discussion with the Dene, there are almost 8,000 kilometres of park there, which will help us to reach our designations. Clearwater Lake, smaller, designated as a natural park, is 607 kilometres. The Duck Mountain Provincial Park, almost 1,300 square kilometres, designated as a natural park; Elk Island, a natural park, small site; Grand Beach, a small site; Grass River, 2,200, almost 2,300 square kilometres of designated as natural; 1,000 square kilometres in the Hecla-Grindstone area; another small park at Kettle. Nopiming, a natural park, 1,400 square kilometres, designated today as a natural park—in other words, it is receiving the protection that will allow us to take portions of it the further step to meet the World Wildlife designations. The wilderness park in Numaykoos Lake, 3,600 square kilometres; Paint Lake, 200 kilometres; Sand Lake, 8,000 kilometres, a wilderness park. Spruce Woods has 250 square kilometres, designated as a natural park; Turtle Mountain, designated as a natural park, almost 200 kilometres; and the Whiteshell almost 3,000 square kilometres, and it is designated natural at this point.

I think that that should give the opposition and anyone else who wants to examine this progress some considerable confidence that not only have we made a gigantic leap forward, but we will be able to proceed with considerable haste to deal with setting aside and preserving further representative areas of the province. But tying that back to the Lakeside Lions housing corporation, I suppose the opposition is going to have to decide if they want to see this go through a logical process as we have put it through and are still following the process or whether they simply want to be on record as being opposed to changing any park boundaries.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Chairman, I have no problem at all indicating to the minister our position on any and all issues. I do not want the minister to think that everything over here in the opposition is all peaches and cream and that we have got no responsibility at all. I am perfectly aware that in two years time, if I am sitting on that side of the House and he is over here, he will remind me of everything I say because everything is in Hansard. So it is not like the best day in opposition is anywhere near the worst day in government, but I do not want the minister to think that it is just easy over here.

If the members across would listen for a minute, I can tell them exactly what we think with the condominium proposal for Winnipeg Beach. It is my thinking that we could avoid all the concern and avoid all of the fighting that has been taking place simply by building the condominium outside of the park and not redrawing the park boundary at all. If there is a valid reason to redraw a park boundary, given whatever the specific situation is, then maybe that can be considered, but I am not impressed by simply redrawing a park boundary to allow a development to take place within the park when the Provincial Park Lands Act in Section 14 says you cannot sell land from inside a park. It seems to me that it makes sense to try to work out an arrangement where the condominium is built outside of the park and not have to redraw the boundary in the first place.

Historical things that have happened, if somebody has built something and had been given permission years ago to build in a certain area and they find out later it was actually part of a park, that is a whole different topic, something that is totally different than

what the situation is right now, and I think the minister understands that.

I put forth probably the worst-case scenario that says that the minister has taken his 22 acres of land, redrawn the boundaries to allow the development to take place, and in his answer he did not dispute that so I am assuming that I am correct in saying that he redrew the boundary because of Section 14 in the Parks act simply to allow this development to take place. Maybe he will take the opportunity to address that the next time he stands on his feet.

The minister also mentioned his work towards including these parks in the goal of 12 percent according to the Brundtland Commission. I want to suggest to the minister that if he keeps redrawing boundaries and making our parks smaller, he is making his target of 12 percent that much more unattainable.

Mr. Chair, unless the minister has any comments on that, I would ask that we move to another part of the same line but another set of questions, but I want to give the minister an opportunity to respond, if he wants to, to what I just put on the record.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, the member has been clear, do not develop inside the park boundary. We set aside a million acres in this description that I just gave him, and he is unwilling to share two or three acres.

**Mr. Struthers:** I have some questions having to do with another one of our provincial parks. It has to do with the Pine Falls forestry company proposal to build a road north along the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the Bloodvein road. I understand what their proposal is to, in Phase I, go up as far as the Bloodvein River and then in Phase II go on beyond that, I am told, to Long Body Creek. Now in different submissions that I have become aware of, eventually the goal is to construct the road as far as Island Lake and some suspect further.

\* (1620)

There are a lot of questions that have arisen in terms of environmental licences and approvals that have been put forth by the Department of Natural Resources. I would like the minister to indicate to this committee what he knows of the stage of this road being proposed



and what the Department of Natural Resources involvement is in the whole process.

**Mr. Cummings:** We are involved as we would under usual circumstances. We are responsible for logging that may or may not occur in that area, and this is strictly for discussion. There is no progress other than information being gathered as far as I am aware at this time. This is a pretty enormous project.

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

**Mr. Struthers:** Can the minister indicate what environmental assessments have been done to this point in regard to this road?

**Mr. Cummings:** I indicated that was simply under discussion and there have been no reviews.

**Mr. Struthers:** Have First Nations communities in the area been included in the discussion so far?

**Mr. Cummings:** This is pretty early on in terms of discussions. I believe Island Lake has had some input.

**Mr. Struthers:** Has any discussion taken place, maybe again it is too early, but concerns have been expressed about the effect of this road on wildlife in the area. Has any discussion at all taken place in terms of its impact on wildlife?

**Mr. Cummings:** It is away too early in discussions to be able to give you any definitive comment on that.

**Mr. Struthers:** Can the minister indicate to me what the goal of the Department of Natural Resources is in terms of how much lumber you project can be taken from that area that you are trying to access with this road?

**Mr. Cummings:** No, I do not think I could give him an answer on what cubic—or how many cords may be taken out. But remember there is a little history to Pine Falls being able to access timber and/or pulp logs, and maybe it would be a good time to remind ourselves that when they were told to leave Atikaki, you know where they were told to go and cut? They were told to stay out of Atikaki, it was a park. You know where they

were sent to cut? Up in his backyard and mine in another park by administration of the same political stripe as the member for Dauphin.

**Mr. Struthers:** Listening to that answer, somehow you knew it was going to become the same political stripe as the member for Dauphin. They always start that way when this government gives those answers, and that is how they always end. That is enough questions there.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Cummings:** There is a very logical connection between cutting rights and whether or not you can cut within a few miles of where your mill is sitting.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** The honourable minister does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Struthers:** Pass.

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

(b)(2) Planning and Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$646,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$198,400—pass; (3) Parks Districts (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$403,400—pass; Other Expenditures \$51,600—pass; (4) Park Operations and Maintenance (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$9,264,900—pass; (a) Other Expenditures \$3,556,400—pass; (5) Support Services (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$177,000—pass; (b) Other Expenditures; \$50,300—pass.

(c) Policy Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$952,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$202,000—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$10,200—pass.

(d) Forestry (1) Administration.

**Mr. Struthers:** Maybe I heard you wrong, but did you read the right number for Other Expenditures under 12.3 (c)? Two hundred and twelve—202? Is it 202? I have 212.

**An Honourable Member:** 202 in this.

**Mr. Struthers:** Oh, okay. That is good.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** (d) Forestry (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$296,600—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$256,200—pass; (c) Grant Assistance \$465,800—pass. (2) Forest Resources Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$770,200.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr Chairperson, in this category I would like to get the minister to give us some information, briefly an update on the Repap situation. I know that there are a lot of people who work at The Pas for Repap who have been quite concerned the last several months in terms of the long-term viability of the—not so much the viability of the operation at The Pas, but the overall business outlook of the company, given all the moves that have been made in the last little while. I would appreciate a bit of an update from the minister on what he can tell me in terms of the sale of Repap and just where that situation is right now.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr Chairman, there really is not much that I can or should add regarding the future of Repap. Everybody would agree that it is a good operation. I think everybody would agree that its very likelihood of continuation is close to being a given when you have a plant that is operating efficiently with a good workforce, good supply of wood. It will be a desirable commodity whether it is part of the Repap chain or some other company. There really is not much else I can add. It is well known that if Avenor had acquired it that they intended to market it, not because it was a money loser but because of their own, they stated up front, corporate strategy. So I am confident that it will continue as is, but it may, in fact, change ownership, and I guess that would be as good an answer as I can provide today.

\* (1630)

**Mr. Struthers:** The concern from a labour point of view in the area from the workers is that there would be any type of downsizing in the workforce at Repap should the ownership of the company change. Now I realize that it is not a given that every time you sell a company you downsize the workforce, but I do notice, as the workers in The Pas notice, that quite often when there is a change in ownership, change in direction, that

downsizing does follow at times. Has the government been able to get any kind of a guarantee, any kind of correspondence with Repap that indeed if they sell this mill in The Pas that the same number of workers will still be working there once that transaction is completed?

**Mr. Cummings:** Essentially, it works probably from the other direction from which the member is approaching this, and that is that the present agreement, the agreement the present company is operating under—they have made certain commitments to develop the plant and if those are honoured, then their cutting rights would continue, and if they are not going to honour those commitments, then there are other people who want to have access to timber. It is not quite that stark. The bottom line, I guess, that I am trying to describe is that we expect status quo and whoever would buy would honour their cutting commitments, ergo the jobs would continue. But we have always got to remember that this is a fluctuating market. Repap went from chips to saw logs pretty quick depending on how the pulp market unfolded as against the saw logs. They have been running what at one time was considered to be the less profitable side of the plant. I am not telling the member anything he does not know. I am sure that he is also aware that that can change, given world markets, but right now some very valuable cutting rights out there.

**Mr. Struthers:** The minister talked about the markets, and that probably leads into a discussion as well as to what is going on at Pine Falls. We have seen what has happened with the markets with newsprint over the last little while, not just that the newsprint market is not going anywhere but that the large mills are being constructed in different parts of the world—Asia, South America. In the middle of this, Pine Falls is looking at an expansion of their forest management licence.

Can the minister maybe put some words on the record for the public in terms of where he sees Pine Falls headed, given the fact that natural resources is what their livelihood depends on, along with the workers there at the Pine Falls Paper Company? What can he tell me about the long-term viability of this company, given the way the market is situated on the world level right now?

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, I think my answer will confirm what I said earlier, that the value of the raw product out there, combined with the efficiency of the operation, can take history in directions that some of us might not have predicted. Almost everyone was predicting the demise of Pine Falls when Abitibi withdrew. They have drawn very little of their credit line down. They have an extremely efficient operation today, hitting a market that has been rising as they have invested. Let me rephrase that. They have been very efficient. They are about to invest to become more efficient, and that is why they are seeking further security on logging and cutting opportunities.

There is a potential for them to invest at least \$80 million more in the plant. That translates into hundreds of millions of dollars in investment when you tie that to an expansion. Most people, and this I suppose could still change, but most people who talked to me were skeptical again about the recycling plant that they added. I am told that it is running very nicely right now, and they are recycling everything they can get their hands on in Manitoba and bringing in more besides. So I am not disturbed by the thought that they want to expand. They have to make sure they have a strong business plan, of course, for these types of considerations to take on any shape or any hard numbers.

They have to be prepared to back up their aspirations, but as the new de-inking plant was opening, at the opening event, one of the main principals in the company indicated that he could see an expansion very soon and that is probably the path that they have been embarked on ever since. It also shows, however, that when you have a workforce that is prepared to have some confidence in themselves and put forward the effort, I mean, these workers at Pine Falls have done an absolutely admirable job of saving their mill. They had some good leadership, but what they did was choose leadership from who were already at the mill, and they took salary freezes and reductions, I believe, for a few years while they were in the formative stages. They literally kept that wood room together with baling wire at one time, but their workmanship and their dedication to their community paid off.

Now, they are not the same workforce that was there 50 years ago. They are in the modern era, and they

have to be efficient. Guaranteeing of jobs is not an easy thing to do. Guaranteeing opportunity for jobs, of course, is what investment is intended to do, and I think the member would agree that whether it is Repap or Pine Falls their ultimate success will be based on the quality of their workforce and the access to reasonable and good quality raw product.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine):** Item 3.(d)(2) Forest Resources Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$770,200—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$137,700—pass; (3) Forest Health and Ecology (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$809,800—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$898,000—pass; (4) Forest Economics and Marketing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$375,000—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$41,500—pass; (5) Forest Renewal \$4,282,600—pass; (6) Pineland Forest Nursery, no amount—pass.

Item 3.(e) Fisheries (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$192,800—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$137,900—pass. (2) Fish Culture (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$599,800.

\* (1640)

**Mr. Struthers:** In so much of our province, especially around the Parklands area and the northern Parklands, the fishing industry has always been part of our area. It has always been something that has been of a great benefit to those of us living in that part of the world, and one of the main components of that fishing industry was Lake Winnipegosis.

As everybody, I think, is aware, Lake Winnipegosis does not quite provide the amount of economic activity as what it used to and for a variety of reasons. What I have been impressed with over the last number of years is the willingness on the part of local fishermen to step forward and have their say in what they think can help to regenerate a fishery, a commercial fishery and a sport fishery that at one time provided a lot more to our local economy in the Parkland area.

I am wondering if the minister can outline for this committee the plans that he hopes to put in place to rejuvenate this Lake Winnipegosis and the fishing industry that has been involved with this lake over the years.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, it is interesting that the member raises Winnipegosis because that is, in fact, a fishery that has had its problems recently, but he indicated that the fishermen were more than willing to have their input and that they wanted to have a say in their future and provide advice on how the lake can be restored.

I look forward to that because, in fact, the Lake Winnipegosis fishery, we extended the perch fishery this winter. It, first of all, was not going to be a fishery. The local fishermen said that they wanted one. There was no opportunity for economic development of any kind, or any income of any kind, if they did not have the perch fishery. It was implemented, albeit a little late, then it was extended for a week, and they said they were catching a lot of suckers the last week, but at least they were getting fish that they said they could market. The walleye are very scarce.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I am on record, and I am anxious to go on record here again, that this may be a lake where it is small enough that we can pull together all of the involved fishermen and ask them to develop a sustainable development plan for the fishery. I am not sure what has happened, whether there has been some lack of effort on our part, but we have asked for a sustainable development strategy. There has been some reaction, but nothing official was responded to. I have just received some further communication that may be the basis for a plan. I have not read it entirely. Certainly, I have gotten good feedback from the people I spoke to when we said we would listen and that we would work with them.

There is very often a significant degree of disagreement between Natural Resources expertise and what the fishermen on the lake believe is the right thing to do for the fishery, and maybe this is a lake where we can test the level of co-operation that perhaps needs to be put in place. I mean, you can tell people not to fish, but they do not believe you sometimes, that they should not, and maybe they are right. On the other hand, I read something last weekend which sort of said is there a million-dollar prize for catching the last pickerel in Lake Winnipegosis.

That is pretty harsh criticism, frankly, and we need to get away from that sort of thing and discuss with the

fishermen—so there is no pickerel there; what are we going to do about it? If we do not know the answers, and you do not believe we know the answers, and you do not think we are going to provide the answers, then you tell us what the answers are. I am prepared to say that we will work with them, but they have to work together among themselves and respond. Then that raises the second question about, why are they reallocating existing unused licences on the lake among themselves?

Maybe they have a good reason, but I do not know what it is at the moment. So this is a lake that I would like to see a very consultative plan developed for the future, but that is a two-way street. If the member believes that the majority of the fishermen on the lake want to work out a plan with me or with the department, then we are all ears because I am told the fishery is not very good and that there are very few fishermen who are still actually active.

My view, at the same time, of quotas is that we do not have to eliminate the opportunity; we have to manage the quotas so that people are not seen to be giving up opportunity at a time when they are asked to reduce their take. I am not sure if that actually sounds better in theory but is impossible to implement or not, but that is the approach that I am bringing to the table, and I hope that we can have some productive discussions because this is not a big lake by fishery standards, I guess.

So it should be small enough where we can get everybody together and have some productive work done on a plan, and I am willing to hear out the fishermen and have them tell us what they think that plan should be, all the way from spawning enhancement to how we manage our quotas. I do not mean any disrespect to the department in making these comments, but if there is a bone of contention out there, an ongoing disagreement on what should be done, then let us all pull together and decide on some middle ground because we have not won yet.

**Mr. Struthers:** Certainly, I must commend the minister for the words he just put on the record. With the people that I have talked to in the Lake Winnipegosis area, I think they have come to the realization that their backs are up against the wall, and

if they do not do something in a co-operative manner, then they are going to kill what was a productive life. I say that not having met formally with groups in the area, but having talked to individual fishermen around the lake in each of the parts of Lake Winnipegosis.

Having said that, I would like to get an understanding of the groups that are there that the minister could approach to meet with him. He is right; it is a small lake. It should not be hard. There probably should not be too many groups to meet with, but could the minister tell me what groups are there for him to meet with?

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, No. 1, of course, would be the quota holders. In a sustainable development strategy, all aspects of the people who have interests in the lake should be at the table. I do not see myself meeting, or the department meeting, in groups of individuals, going from group to group. I see bringing them together, primarily the people who have a stake in the resource, but there are also people with sporting interests who should be at the table, and the department needs to be at the table, biologists and people who have some knowledge of how to manage the resources. There is an advisory board that has been in place for quite a while, I am told.

I am open to suggestions, frankly. I mean, it is a concept, and one of the principles of sustainable development is that everyone who has an interest in the matter that is being debated or discussed or decided upon should have an opportunity to be heard at the table. The difficulty is, and I say this with the greatest of respect, the fishery-dependent people are going to have to play a significant role in advising how we take this forward.

\* (1650)

It is not a matter of putting more Natural Resources officers on the lake. It is a matter of having those who are the users of the lake decide how they are going to use it. There are all sorts of theories from one end of the spectrum to the other, including high water problems may be damaging spawning interests. I have no idea if that is relevant or not, but there certainly have been a multiplicity of events that are an effect on the lake. There is the Wildlife Federation. I suppose the various communities where you have services supplied

out of that may desire to have people at the table as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** [inaudible] Excuse me, I am just going to go over that again. Shall the item pass? Pass. (b) Other Expenditures \$300,600—pass.

We are now on (e)(3) Fisheries Habitat Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$323,100.

**Mr. Struthers:** I would like the minister to speak a little bit about the sustainable development strategy for fisheries. I listened intently in the throne speech for an announcement for a complete Sustainable Development Act—missed it, but what did come through in the throne speech was a line about the sustainable development strategies for fisheries and for wildlife. We are on the Fisheries line, so I would like to know what process the minister is going to undertake in terms of a sustainable development strategy, and who will be involved in that process.

**Mr. Cummings:** It will be a broad-based consultative approach from fisheries, from recreation, from all of the impacted areas related to our fish community, if you will. It is certainly not something that is going to occur overnight; it will take some considerable length of time.

The sustainable development, the development of policies has followed a certain format over the last few years but in developing a strategy, it is the same development strategy on fisheries. I have already had enough experience with meeting with the communities and various interests. This is a highly volatile—and Lake Winnipeg more so than probably the other lakes, but very volatile. It has some overtones to it that I do not particularly like, and it will take a long process. I do believe that if people who have a vested interest meet face to face amongst themselves to make decisions that they will come up with some advice, and we can come up with a strategy that will be quite workable.

**Mr. Struthers:** Is there a time frame that the minister can indicate that discussion will take place? I am especially interested in an end date as to when we can look forward to some actual strategies coming out of the discussions.

**Mr. Cummings:** There will have to be some initial work done to develop a bit of a generic plan that can be taken out for the basis for discussion and that will take some time. As I say, this is going to be longer in development probably than some of the other strategies that we have pulled together, because there are a wide variety of interests that are involved today and that is not going to make the process any easier.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Should the item pass? The item is accordingly passed. (b) Other Expenditures \$70,300—pass.

(e)(4) Sport and Commercial Fishing Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$457,600.

**Mr. Struthers:** Can the minister indicate whether he is considering regulations regarding ice fishing contests?

**Mr. Cummings:** No, we have developed some guidelines, but we have not moved towards regulation.

**Mr. Struthers:** I am wondering if, given the publicity that some of the ice fishing contests got in the last little while, over the last winter, and some of the hardships that were created, would the minister at some point consider regulations as opposed to guidelines?

**Mr. Cummings:** It sounds like the member is asking if we should be regulating the prizes and the guaranteeing of the prizes and those sorts of things. I am not inclined to move in that direction unless he can give me a better reason.

**Mr. Chairperson:** [inaudible] I am going to go back to the beginning here. Where was I? Sports and fishing? Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed. (e)(4)(b) Other Expenditures \$80,500—pass; (5) Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance \$250,000—pass; (6) Fisheries Enhancement Initiative \$350,000—pass.

(f) Wildlife (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$283,700.

**Mr. Struthers:** Again, springing from the Speech from the Throne, the minister at that point indicated, much

like he did with the fishing strategy, a sustainable development strategy for fishing, and I would like to ask the same question in terms of wildlife. What is the process he will be using to develop some strategies under the sustainable development with wildlife? I would be interested in the process again, and also who would be involved in that discussion, in the strategy towards sustainable development for wildlife.

**Mr. Cummings:** It would include the complete range of involvement from conservation to the users of the resource, community interest. We have already seen a fair divergence of opinion, for example, on hunting regulations that were considered this fall, so we know there again you are going to have a—these are the types of strategies. I suspect, that will develop a lot more debate than, for example, water strategy did. Water strategy might have been discussed in detail when there was an issue around the Assiniboine, but other than that, it does not create a debate situation for as wide a segment of the public. We intend to develop a base document that we can use for the genesis of some discussion and pull that discussion together. Again, I see a process that will be a little bit longer than perhaps some of the other strategies were and try and have it built from the bottom up.

**Mr. Struthers:** The people that would be involved in that strategy, would that include the Manitoba Wildlife Federation?

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes, and I should indicate, and I guess it goes sort of without comment, that we expect to involve the Sustainable Development Secretariat. They would help co-ordinate all the different work, along with the department, to pull together these strategies. That is one of the strong points of having the structure that we do so that we can have policy development that is somewhat independent but works closely with the day-to-day line workers in the department.

\* (1700)

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

**IN SESSION****PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m. and time for Private Members' Business.

**House Business**

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** On a matter of House business, Madam Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Thursday, April 24, at ten o'clock in the forenoon to consider the Annual Reports and Five Year Plans of the Workers Compensation Board.

I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Thursday, April 17, at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

**Madam Speaker:** For the information of the House, the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m., on Thursday, April 24, to consider Workers Compensation; the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Thursday, April 17, at 10 a.m.

**PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS****Res. 5—Impartiality of the Speaker**

**Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway):** Madam Speaker, I am privileged to move the following resolution,

“WHEREAS it is generally agreed that the Speakership is the most important safeguard to the effective functioning of the Parliamentary system; and

“WHEREAS there is an implicit contract between members and the Speaker based on a clear understanding that the considerable powers a House gives to a Speaker will not be abused and that no favouritism to one side or the other will be shown; and

“WHEREAS one authority on the British Speakership has written, 'it is inconceivable today that any Speaker would be consciously partisan,'; and

“WHEREAS the essential argument for non-partisanship is that the Speaker must not only be impartial but must also be perceived to be impartial, or as stated by Erskine May, 'Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as their object not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also to ensure that his (sic) impartiality is generally recognized.'; and

“WHEREAS the main test of the Speaker's impartiality, according to the literature on speakership, is the choice of who speaks in debate; and

“WHEREAS according to John Fraser, the election of the Speaker by secret ballot is a strong tool for ensuring the Speaker's independence.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to support legislation to elect the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba by secret ballot to ensure the Speaker's independence.”

**Madam Speaker:** With regret, I must advise the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) that his resolution is out of order for two reasons.

First, contrary to our Rule 31 and Beauchesne's Citation 558, it revives a debate already concluded in this session. An amendment with the same objective was defeated on March 4.

Secondly, the resolution anticipates Bill 200 which would provide for the secret ballot election of a Speaker. Beauchesne's Citation 513(2) states that in such cases priority is given to the more effective proceeding, which in this case would be Bill 200.

**Point of Order**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for some clarification on your ruling.

The motion that the member has brought forward deals specifically with a statement of this Legislature and urges the government to support legislation. It

makes no reference to the private members' bill, and, Madam Speaker, the difficulty we have is under our rules. We have no way of ensuring that a vote is held on that bill. The only effective way for this type of legislation to be dealt with is basically if the government does support it.

So I am just wondering on what basis you feel that this is inconsistent with both debating this motion, which is a separate matter, and Bill 200. I am wondering if you could clarify. Also, the debate that was concluded—you made reference, Madam Speaker, to that point on March 4. That did not deal with anything that urged the provincial government to support legislation to elect a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I am wondering if you could clarify in what way the debate on March 4 would in any way, shape or form contradict this.

The debate at that time was over our nonconfidence in the current occupant of the Speaker's Chair. It was not to deal with what is a very clear statement made by the member, something, I think, that deserves to be debated in this House, and that is the need for not just the opposition but members on the government side to recognize the need for an elected Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Can I deal with the point of order or point of clarification? I am not sure which the honourable member for Thompson wishes it to be referred to as. Were you up on a point of clarification or a point of order?

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I am hoping you could clarify—I rose on a point of order on your ruling for clarification.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, for clarification purposes the amendment—to clarify the record, the amendment that I referred to in the ruling was the amendment moved by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) which dealt exclusively with all members agreeing to the election of a Speaker.

#### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Burrows, on a point of order.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. You cited Rule 31 of the rules of the Manitoba Legislature, and I am wondering if you have taken into mind that rules evolve and change over time. I was just recently reading an article in The Globe and Mail about rulings by, I believe it is, Speaker Stockwell in the Ontario Legislature and also federal Speakers, which suggests that the tradition and rules in the past about not having a debate about something that is already a bill on the Order Paper is being relaxed and that Speakers are not enforcing this rule to the same extent that they have in the past. I am wondering if you have considered that, or would consider this in your current ruling on whether or not this resolution is in order or not.

\* (1710)

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** On the point raised by the honourable member for Burrows, I cannot help but comment that it can easily be argued that our procedures are based on rules and orders and the writings of Arthur Beauchesne and the rules and customs and usages of Legislatures around the world. This is a first when the Toronto Globe and Mail now becomes one of the authorities under which we operate in this particular Chamber. So I would ask, with respect to you, Madam Speaker and the honourable member for Burrows, that perhaps this latest point of order is quite out of order.

**Madam Speaker:** The point of order raised by the honourable member for Burrows is indeed out of order. We have a process and a procedure for changing our rules through the rules House committee, and our Rule 31 is very explicit. At this point, I have made a ruling. I will not entertain any—I have been advised I should not even be entertaining any debate on points of orders on the ruling. The members know the rules that, if indeed they disagree with the ruling, they have the right to challenge the ruling that has been brought forward.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Ashton:** We do know the rules, and we believe your interpretation of the rules is incorrect. The rules are in place, Rule 31. This matter was placed on the Order Paper by the member prior to this session, was part of the draw, should not in any way be prevented



from being discussed by any interpretation of 31. Therefore, given once again the fact that we disagree fundamentally with your interpretation of the rules in this House, in this case what we believe is the abandonment of the rules in this House, we challenge your ruling, Madam Speaker.

#### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay

**Madam Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

#### Formal Vote

**Mr. Ashton:** Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please rise.

#### Division

*A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:*

#### Nays

*Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Friesen, Hickes, Jennissen, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.*

#### Yeas

*Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.*

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** Yeas 26, Nays 16.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Madam Speaker, I was paired with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). If I would have voted, I would have voted not to sustain the ruling of the Chair.

**Madam Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has accordingly been sustained.

**Mr. McCrae:** Madam Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

#### Res. 6—Teacher Compensation

**Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital):** I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed),

“WHEREAS a review of teacher collective bargaining and compensation has been requested and recommended by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees in formal resolutions from their annual general meetings and as recommended in the Report of the Legislative Review Commission; and

“WHEREAS the Teacher Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review Committee Report recommended that the issues related to teacher compensation be further examined; and

“WHEREAS the provincial government agreed that due to the complexities of the issues there would be further examination and review.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that members of the Legislative Assembly support the provincial government as part of its overall commitment to making meaningful improvements to protect the future of education and Manitoba's students through the appointment of Mr. John Scurfield, QC, to review the structure of teacher compensation to assess whether it is appropriate and fair.”

**Motion presented.**

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 10, 1997

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>	Lamoureux; Vodrey	1250
<b>Reading and Receiving Petitions</b>	SmartHealth	
Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms	McGifford; Filmon	1250
Wowchuk	Sale; Filmon	1251
<b>Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees</b>	Immigration	
Committee of Supply	Hickes; Vodrey	1252
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>	<b>Nonpolitical Statements</b>	
1999 World Junior Hockey Championship	St. James Canadians	
Downey	McAlpine	1253
Doer	Doer	1253
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>	Midget Speed Skating Championship	
Bill 14, Pension Benefits Amendment Act	Ernst	1254
Bill 16, Council on Post-Secondary Education Amendment Act	Brent Chief Day	
<b>Oral Questions</b>	Wowchuk	1254
Adolescent Pregnancy		
Doer; Mitchelson		
Doer; McIntosh		
Flood Prevention		
Dewar; Cummings		
South Transcona Water Retention Pond		
Cerilli; Reimer		
Education System		
Friesen; McIntosh		
Brew Pubs		
Lamoureux; Vodrey		
Manitoba Liquor Control Commission		