



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 26, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

#### Apology—First Minister

**Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas):** Madam Speaker, I want to rise on a matter of privilege in regard to comments that were made by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) in Hansard yesterday wherein he said that if I had not been inciting conflict in Cross Lake, the chief and council members of Cross Lake would have been to the table to finish negotiating the terms and conditions of the Northern Flood and ready to be implemented.

Now, Madam Speaker, on Thursday afternoon, while I was here, I received a fax from members of Cross Lake telling me, advising me what they had done. That same afternoon, I went to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman). I asked him if he had a fax and he said: Yes, I have one. I asked him what he was going to do. He advised me that a letter was being written up and he was going to send it to the members of Cross Lake. That was Thursday afternoon.

Friday I was in The Pas, I believe it was four in the afternoon. I received a call from the Minister of Northern Affairs asking me if I would be willing to accompany him to Cross Lake, if he were willing to go. I said yes, I would be willing. Then towards the end of our conversation, he said: But you have to be invited by the chief in order for you to go. At that point, I became confused as to what he was driving at. In any event, I promised that I would do whatever I can to resolve the situation. If he needed me, I would be willing to go.

As a matter of fact, he went so far as to say: Do we have a deal then? I said: What deal? Well, that you are going to come with me to Cross Lake. He said: I will make arrangements for us to be paired for Monday. I said yes, fine. That was the conversation I had with the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Now, if I had been to Cross Lake organizing a blockade, as the First Minister is saying, would I have been talking to the Minister of Northern Affairs, offering my services, offering my advice and guidance wherever he might need me? [interjection] Yes, with a smirk on your face, because that is the kind of attitude you have had right from day one. This morning, the First Minister was interviewed by his buddy Peter Warren at CJOB. I listen to them every now and then when they meet with each other, and the Premier apparently said on radio that I had gone up to Cross Lake to organize the blockade.

Madam Speaker, I find those comments to be offensive. I find those comments to be demeaning. I find those comments to mean that I, as a representative of the riding of The Pas, cannot go to my constituents when they invite me to talk about issues that affect them directly. Also, when I refer to aboriginal people and the problems that they face, I always say—and I have said it in this House before—I as an aboriginal person have a vested interest that my people are being treated right, that we are being treated right. When the woman and a child were shot by the RCMP in Alberta, it affected me. It affected me greatly. As one of my friends said to me, if you prick my people, would I hurt?

So when things like this go on, whether it is in Cross Lake, The Pas, Norway House or Alberta or Garden Hill, it affects me because I am an aboriginal person, and I have said that over and over again in this Chamber. Whatever happens to my people, it affects me; it affects my daughter; it affects my family and my community.

So for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to say that I had gone up to Cross Lake to organize a blockade, Madam Speaker, he is wrong. He is totally wrong.

So, therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), that the Premier apologize to this House for comments he made in Question Period yesterday in regard to myself on the blockade at Cross Lake.

**Motion presented.**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable government House leader, on the matter of privilege.

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I understand the rules, there are two matters to be decided at this point: first, whether the honourable member for The Pas has raised his question of privilege in a timely fashion. I do not propose to argue on that matter as this will have been the first opportunity the honourable member would have had to comment on the printed Hansard.

On the second matter, that being whether the honourable member has a prima facie case of privilege in order to raise the matter, his argument falls very far short of what is required, Madam Speaker, in my opinion.

The honourable member, for whatever reason, failed to quote from Hansard the words of the First Minister about which he is concerned. I believe the words he is referring to are found on page 1066 of Hansard for yesterday, which I will read into the record as follows, quoting the First Minister: "This government has operated in good faith, has negotiated to try and arrive at fair and reasonable settlements, and I might say four of the five First Nations involved in the Northern Flood Agreement have resolved their issues and have settled with hundreds of millions of dollars being flowed to those First Nations. I think that is a record of which we can be very, very proud. I say to the member opposite, rather than stir up discontent and conflict, he ought to get involved in attempting to ensure that the people of Cross Lake come to the table to complete the negotiations for the benefit of all of the people of Cross Lake."

Those are the words, I believe, the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) finds so offensive, and he uses other words to describe those words. But what is really happening is—as a matter of fact, what we have here is a difference of opinion on the construction of these words by two honourable members, one being the First Minister and one being the honourable member for The Pas. But as an observer and not one who was part of that discussion between the two, it appears to me the honourable member for The Pas is

being extremely defensive about his own rhetoric and his own behaviour with respect to the matter about which we are talking, sensitive about his own position and his own actions, and this is what gives rise to his question of privilege today, or it may also be a wish to carry on with the kind of behaviour on his part which has been to bring about some disorder in that part of Manitoba.

So in my opinion, Madam Speaker, the honourable member for The Pas has been caught. He has been caught by his own rhetoric and his own behaviour and now wants to blame the First Minister for his own problems. The First Minister's words are, in no way, a breach of anybody's privilege either inside this House or words uttered outside the House, which I suggest—[interjection]

\* (1340)

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. A matter of privilege is a very serious matter.

**An Honourable Member:** Well, kick the Premier out.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Could we all afford each other a little common courtesy? The honourable member for—[interjection] I interrupted previously when the honourable member for The Pas was having exchanges across the floor when he was speaking.

The honourable government House leader, to complete his remarks.

**Mr. McCrae:** As I was saying, Madam Speaker, the point raised by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), by no stretch of the imagination amounts to anything resembling or close to a question of privilege, and on this occasion—especially when we are dealing with such a serious matter as a question of privilege—the honourable member ought to have thought twice before raising this matter as a question of privilege.

Indeed, the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) himself, on the day previous to yesterday, day before yesterday on March 24, used these words in this House: "The blockade that we have set up in Cross Lake currently." Those are the words of the honourable

member for The Pas. He has been caught by his own activity and by his own rhetoric in this House. He has no question of privilege, and honourable members ought not to abuse the rules of the House in this way.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of privilege.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that the member has raised this at the first opportunity. It refers to comments made yesterday. We have received the Hansard. It certainly meets that aspect of a matter of privilege, and I would also suggest that this is particularly germane to the elements of privilege that are established through many centuries of tradition which enable members of the Legislature, members of any parliament, to come before the House and represent their constituents.

You know, Madam Speaker, the comments made by the Premier (Mr. Filmon), I would say, are not atypical of comments that we hear from the Premier. Unfortunately, I might add, they are not atypical of comments we have heard from this Premier regarding the member for The Pas in the past. I find it ironic that the member was censured for using the term "racist" in terms of policies, but I have sat here and heard this member, the Premier, accuse the member for The Pas of being racist.

You know, where have we come to in this province when we have the Premier and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) doing such things as the Minister of Northern Affairs, in his letter to the people of Cross Lake, saying I expect you to lead, being guided by the honour and value system of your people. Where is the trust, honesty, respect, courage, integrity and wisdom in what you are condoning supported with these actions?

The days of the great white father belong in the 1890s, not the 1990s. That minister and this Premier are showing a paternalistic and condescending attitude to aboriginal people in this province. That is unacceptable. Perhaps this Premier cannot understand that in 1998 the people of Cross Lake make their own decisions independently, and he should understand that and respect that, Madam Speaker, and not try and find

others, point fingers at others. I say as someone who has been proud to represent many aboriginal people in my constituency that I think the attitude shown by this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman), with their condescending attitude, is at the root of many of the problems we face, the frustration aboriginal people face in this province.

I want to suggest that they have given away exactly what they think. I find it interesting that the Premier talked about the negotiations in four other flood communities and how the negotiations took place in terms of good faith. We now see that so long as there was an agreement, they consider it to be good faith, but when the people of Cross Lake say that they do not agree, that somehow is something that is not acceptable, and this Premier and this Minister of Northern Affairs then have a greater say.

Madam Speaker, negotiations are a multipart process. It involves people coming to the table with differing views, and fundamentally it must start with respect of those views. I say to the Premier and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, if you wish a resolution of this situation at Cross Lake, the way to start is by respecting the people of Cross Lake, something you have shown you are fundamentally incapable of doing. I say that if the government is looking for some of the root causes at what is going on in Cross Lake, they might want to look at what has been happening in that community. It is a community that I know well. It is a community I have managed to have the opportunity to visit many times. I have talked in Cross Lake. I remember—and I was in Cross Lake—there were I believe five young people committed suicide in the space of six months. It is the legacy of the kind of poverty that we see in that community, the desperation that we see and we have seen in other communities. I know the frustration of talking to the elders and what happened in that process.

What is happening in Cross Lake is obviously a decision that that community has taken. No one should doubt that. Whether it is the right or the wrong thing is none of the business of the Premier or the Minister of Northern Affairs. It is fundamentally, first of all, the business of the people of Cross Lake. I ask the Premier to consider the following, what level of frustration there is in Cross Lake. I do not know when the last time he was in Cross Lake. Unfortunately, the Premier's travel

schedule usually manages to include Switzerland before it includes northern Manitoba. I say that if he did take the time to talk to the people of Cross Lake, they would talk about such issues as the bridge, the arbitration, the fact that we have had rulings saying that we should receive, the people of Cross Lake are entitled to decent road access and bridge access. The bottom line, it is because of much of the frustration of a government that does not even take the time to go and visit the people of Cross Lake. I would urge you to consider this as being a prima facie case of privilege.

The member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has repeatedly, and I say the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) as well have repeatedly had to face kinds of attacks on their individual characters that many of us in this Chamber do not have to face. I say if there is one thing we wish to see in this Legislature is that it reflects all Manitobans, and it is time that aboriginal Manitobans can come in this Legislature and not face the kinds of attacks from this Premier, the cheap personal attacks from this Premier. They are entitled to speak out on behalf of aboriginal people just as any member of this Legislature is on behalf of their constituents.

I conclude, Madam Speaker, by suggesting that the appropriate thing for the minister to do, for once, instead of taking these cheap, personal shots, would be a statesperson, to put down the rhetoric of confrontation that he is stirring up, nobody else, that he has got his Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) writing letters on. I say to the minister let us follow up what the original suggestion was. Let us meet, let us sit down, let us talk, let us withdraw the rhetoric, and fundamentally, let us start understanding that we have to respect the rights of aboriginal people in this Legislature, not attack their personal integrity.

\*(1350)

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** I am sure, Madam Speaker, you will have noted that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) did nothing but engage in very, very aggressive, loud condemnation of members opposite but did not address the substance of the presumed attempted matter of privilege because there is no matter of privilege. In fact, the member opposite, in attempting to allege that something I said was a

matter of privilege, did not even quote any of what I said. The only accurate quote of what I said that was put on the record was put on by the government House leader, and it was not even close to anything that I am alleged to have said by the member opposite because I did not say what he alleges.

The member for Thompson, (Mr. Ashton), of course, is embarrassed at having to defend that, and so he resorts, as he always does, into simple, low, personal attacks. I will tell you, if he wants to talk about people who are being personally slandered or personally attacked every day in this House, all he has to do is look in the mirror, as each one of his members does. Even just a matter of minutes ago, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) shouted "redneck" across here and does not have the courage to withdraw that kind of statement. That is what we have to put up with day after day after day from this crew opposite, and that is why they are where they are because they do not have, nor do they deserve, the respect of the people of this province.

I will say that the reason that they attempt to have this kind of flimsy political issue as the basis of their attempting to get support for their position is because they are embarrassed at two decades of inaction by New Democrats in this province when they had a chance to do something for the people of the North, and particularly for our aboriginal brothers and sisters in the North.

I say to you all you have to do is look at their being in office for some 15 years and during that period of time not making any resolution of the treaty land entitlements in this province. Since we have been in office, Madam Speaker, we have resolved the treaty land entitlement for almost 30 First Nations in this province.

While they were in office, they did absolutely zero, zero towards the north central hydro system to provide hydro electricity, finally, to nine First Nations communities in that part of the province, that inaccessible part of the province. They were getting, finally, finally, the opportunity to live to a standard that others in the province are able to live because they had electricity provided for them, not only at a cost savings, but at a dramatic increase in their quality of living.

This government did that for them, and they are embarrassed about it.

Finally, of course, there were the negotiations on the Northern Flood Agreement, negotiations that got absolutely nowhere under the New Democrats. I have spoken to many First Nations people in the North over the years when they were in office, and they said that they knew, despite the fact that they were represented by New Democrats, that they would never get a settlement out of New Democrats. They were just being given lip service all the time by New Democrats who represented them, and they got nowhere, absolutely nowhere towards the settlement of those northern flood agreements.

Because we treated those people in those First Nations with respect, because we acted in good faith at all times, four of the five First Nations were able to arrive at a settlement, at a comprehensive settlement. Even Cross Lake, under its former leadership and administration, arrived at an agreement in principle because we were determined to resolve all of the issues that were outstanding irritants left to us by the New Democrats between the aboriginal people and the rest of society. We did that by making a commitment in good faith and a commitment that was not delivered in any way by the New Democrats despite all of their rhetoric, and now they are embarrassed, and so all they can do is lash out in this phoney way to try and get away from the substance of the fact that we have been delivering all of the things that they could not or would not to the aboriginal people of the North.

Madam Speaker, I say to the member for The Pas that I agree with him completely when he says that when things are happening to his people, to his aboriginal brothers and sisters, that appear to be negative towards them, it hurts him. I agree, and that is precisely the point that I am making is that by not supporting their going to the table to complete this agreement, he is hurting them in the long term. He is denying them a hundred million dollars or more of compensation, and in supporting the blockade he has denied several communities the ability to have electricity for a full year. I think that hurts all of us, and that is the kind of thing that we have to be aware of. It is not rhetoric, it is not politics; it is helping the people of the North, and

that is exactly what we are attempting to do by all of the things that we have been doing.

So I say the member has no point of privilege and did not even read the exact words that I said because they would not support his point of privilege. There is none, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** A matter of privilege is a serious matter. I am therefore going to take this matter under advisement to consult with the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

#### Women's Resource Centres

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Doreen Thordarson, C. Marks, N. Walkin and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

#### Women's Resource Centres

**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.

*THAT the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre provides services which focus on prevention and intervention in domestic abuse for communities within a 100-kilometre radius;*

*THAT with only partial funding from the provincial government, Family Dispute Services, in the amount of*

*\$37,600 and some funding from the communities it serves, the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre hires three part-time employees and provides telephone, counselling, training and seminar facilities, in addition to education, information and outreach programming; and*

*THAT Evergreen Women's Resource Centre is also involved in referral services on a crisis-intervention and second-stage outreach level; and*

*THAT for years, the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre has struggled to provide these vital programs and services with limited funding or commitment from the provincial government; and*

*THAT during the 1995 provincial election, the Filmon government said, "The safety and security of the individual, our families and our communities is vital to the quality of our life."; and*

*THAT if the Filmon government is really committed to that statement, it must back it up with funding for the agencies that provide services to make it a reality.*

*WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.*

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Rural Development.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1997 Annual Reports Concerning Complaints about Judicial Conduct.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to

the public gallery where we have this afternoon 19 visitors from the Teens Against Drunk Driving Program under the direction of Mrs. Dorothy Streamer and Mr. Bob Davis. This group is located in the constituencies of the honourable members for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

#### Misericordia General Hospital Breast Care Services

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, yesterday we asked the government about its closure of the comprehensive breast care program at the Misericordia Hospital. We asked questions of whether the government had consulted with patients. We have since heard from people that have been patients and are patients of the Misericordia Hospital comprehensive breast care program. A person named Shirley Gering yesterday stated that we have something great here, please leave our services where they are—as a statement to the provincial government.

I would like to ask the Premier: will he override his Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) in terms of his final decision on the Misericordia that is contained in the minister's letter to the Misericordia Hospital? Will he override that decision of the Minister of Health and order that his Minister of Health begin a consultative process on what decisions the government is making including the patients that rely on these very, very lifesaving and important services that we have here at the Misericordia Hospital?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I want to make a number of points. Firstly, the reorganization of hospitals and health care in Manitoba under regional health authorities is a very comprehensive process that requires a great deal of consultation and a great deal of input from people, stakeholders throughout the system. That is something that has occupied a great deal of time of the Minister of Health, many members of our government and certainly all of the various people within the Department of



Health and indeed within health care in the province. That has resulted in many areas that have become obvious and areas that required us to take action to ensure that we could improve the availability of services. Throughout the past decade, that has certainly been an objective of our government, particularly as it relates to providing more comprehensive services and spreading them more widely throughout the province, which is why breast screening, for instance, something which it was available perhaps for a few thousand people a year back at the time we took office, is now available in three different cities in the province: in Brandon, in Thompson, in Winnipeg.

We have a very comprehensive unit in Misericordia that does provide extensive opportunities for various breast cancer and breast health initiatives. We have gone from a period of time in which we did less than a few thousand to where over the last two and a half years we did 35,000 breast screenings in this province.

We now are moving with two additional mobile breast screening units to expand that to where we will have over 35,000 breast screenings this year alone. Comprehensive service is being developed and many things that have to be dealt with, and our government is committed to ensuring that we provide the best possible service to the people of the province, the women of the province. We have made that commitment not only with available facilities but with the money available to expand these comprehensive services to them.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed that the Premier will not consult and have his minister consult with the patients that are directly affected, that want a voice in the future of health care and want a voice before this government destroys the comprehensive breast care program here in Winnipeg at the Misericordia Hospital. I want to table a letter today from a surgeon at the breast surgery program at the Misericordia Hospital, and I want to quote this surgeon who states: it makes no sense to have any kind of postoperative care in acute care if there is no surgical access.

Will this government consult with the medical experts who are also saying do not destroy the comprehensive breast care services program located at the Misericordia Hospital?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I know that the minister will be listening to people from all areas of the health care field and experts in the field of dealing with breast screening, breast cancer and all of the various services and supports that go into that. That is why our government has gone into this area to such a great extent; that is why it has expanded this area dramatically, and we will continue to do what we can to ensure that we make the system as good as possible for the people who use the system.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, the doctor goes on to talk about the need to connect the surgery and the program of surgery for breast cancer with all the other presurgical programs and postsurgical programs and counselling. He says that the decision to make this radical change does not make any sense, and it belies the issue of understanding the whole program in terms of a comprehensive breast care program.

So the government is not listening to patients. It is not listening to medical advice. Every time this government destroys a very positive program, whether it is home care or whether it is a comprehensive program for breast care services, they do not listen to patients. They do not listen to medical advice. They just go ahead. They build up a program over four years. It is a good program, and then they try to destroy it without any cost-benefit analysis, without any review of the patients and without any review of the medical staff.

Will the Premier perform a cost-benefit analysis? Will he agree to have his minister meet with patients, and will they listen to medical advice that says that this government is making the wrong decision?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, we are not going to destroy this program. We are the government that created this program and that has built up this program over the last four years. So the members opposite can take no credit for that.

I can tell members opposite that, despite the fact that we have put a lot of resources and we have built up the program, there are still areas of concern and complaints that are made by people. I saw some in the paper within the last week that talked about having to move from one hospital to another with wires in them, and of

course, the reason for that is that those who do breast cancer surgery do not always have admitting privileges at the same hospital in this particular system that exists today, which is why we have to bring it under a central health authority, the Winnipeg Health Authority, to try and overcome that problem so people do not have to move from getting one particular part of the treatment at one hospital to another and so on and so forth.

So we are having to deal with all of these issues to create a better system that will provide care on a more comprehensive basis to the people who need it. Indeed, in the process of doing all of that, the minister has been consulting, will continue to consult, and that is why we will, I am sure, arrive at the best solution for all concerned.

#### **Misericordia General Hospital Breast Care Services**

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health has consistently told this House that his government is committed to a comprehensive centralized one-stop breast care program, just like the one that he wants to dismantle at the Misericordia Hospital. Yet on CBC this morning the minister says that, and I quote: surgery does not have to be done at one particular place. Then we have Dr. Blake McClarty calling for a one-stop program.

Madam Speaker, I want to call on the Premier and ask him to stop this equivocation and tell this House whether his government favours comprehensive centralized service or fragmented services. Is there a plan? What is the plan?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** I know that it will be difficult for the member opposite to understand when we talk about having a central program administration with decentralized delivery, but she should know, for instance, that people can go for mammography even today in Brandon, in Thompson, in Winnipeg. So there is a decentralization that is good for women throughout the province. We are adding two mobile breast screening units so that it will become even more decentralized in part of its delivery.

In conjunction with all of those things, there are people throughout the province, and I hear from them

regularly, who want to have as many of the different functions that are able to be performed in their area of the province done so. You can still have a central organizational unit, a central program unit, without having everything done in one location throughout all of this process. That is something that the minister is working on with the experts, and he is not just doing it on the basis of the kind of short-term politics that the member for Osborne is attempting to portray.

\* (1410)

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, the Premier certainly is gallant.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. McGifford:** Since indications are that the Misericordia ophthalmology program will continue, or may continue, with all its components, I want to ask if this government, if this Premier will guarantee Manitoba's women that the Misericordia breast care program will also remain in place.

**Mr. Filmon:** This is not a question that I should be answering on behalf of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik). I will take that question as notice on his behalf and suggest that as of the next time we will be sitting, the Minister of Health's Estimates will be up for debate and discussion, and I am sure that she will want to get into a very comprehensive discussion with him on that topic, and I would recommend that she do so.

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, since the Premier seems unwilling to listen to us, I wonder if he will listen to consumers like Alison Bailes who says, and I quote: without a program, we are not getting totally holistic comprehensive care. Well, if he does not want to listen to the public, I will ask the question—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

#### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Filmon:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, at no time did I say I was unwilling to listen to the member for Osborne; at no time did I say that. In fact, I encouraged her to get the information in detailed form from the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) who is the

appropriate authority on this matter. Now how she could possibly misrepresent that is beyond me, and I would ask her to please withdraw that comment.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Yes, on the same point of order, Madam Speaker. It is clearly not a point of order; in fact, the member is very specific in her question, and I find it quite noteworthy that what she was referring to was the fact that the Premier, who presumably is in charge—that is where the buck stops in this province, at his desk—refused to answer the question. So not only was the member not out of order, she was absolutely right on in asking that question on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** I will take the point of order under advisement and report back to the House.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Osborne to please pose her final supplementary question with no postamble or preamble.

**Ms. McGifford:** I want to ask the Premier if he will listen to consumers like Alison Bailes from Breast Cancer Action Manitoba and keep the Breast Care Clinic at the Misericordia Hospital open for Manitoba women.

**Mr. Filmon:** I will definitely listen to all women, all consumers and all citizens of Manitoba.

#### Misericordia General Hospital Breast Care Services

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Madam Speaker, Misericordia has a lodge which provides low-cost housing for rural and northern women who are in need of breast cancer treatment, not breast screening but breast cancer treatment. They can stay there while they are getting treatment, and they can get supports. The hospice provides a secure and supportive environment for rural and northern women as they go through a very traumatic experience.

Why does the Premier not recognize the importance of this service for rural and northern women, and will he ensure that that service that is there now will continue to be in place for women who have to face this kind of treatment?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** We do recognize the importance of that service; that is why we created it. I can assure her that we will continue to provide that service.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I want assurances from the Premier that he will recognize the importance of that housing program that is there, and given that a nurse in the surgical unit says that she sees a great difference between women who come through with these supportive services and those that do not and that women who come through the program are more prepared than those who do not get the services and have a better outlook on life, will he ensure that the housing program that is there for rural and northern women who are taking cancer treatment, not screening, will have that service provided.

**Mr. Filmon:** I think I just answered that question.

#### Health Care System Diagnostic Testing Waiting Lists

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Swan River, with a final supplementary question.

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** I would like to ask the minister how he can face people in rural Manitoba when, although he says the service will not be fragmented, we know from people that it will, but also, although they announced that diagnostic waiting list would be slashed, I have a constituent, Mrs. Vivian Toderash, who was told in January she has a possible brain tumour, it is three months—

**Madam Speaker:** Would the honourable member please pose the question now.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would like to ask the Premier how he can explain that diagnostic waiting lists are supposed to be shorter in Manitoba when I have a constituent, Mrs. Vivian Toderash, who was told in January that she had a possible brain tumour, she is just now being put on

the waiting list and told she will have to wait seven months before she can have an MRI to diagnose whether or not she has a brain tumour. How can you face Manitobans with those kinds of stats?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) could probably give a better answer if he knew the circumstances of the case and could speak with the doctor involved to understand just exactly what the doctor is recommending and under what circumstances.

I do know this: that we announced both in December and again in the budget additional funding for reducing the waiting lists in all of these areas, and we are committed to do so.

#### **Health Care System Diagnostic Testing Waiting Lists**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Manitobans are waiting far too long for diagnostic tests, particularly MRIs in this province. I spoke with a physician whose waiting lists for MRIs is completely out of line with the designated clinical guidelines. I should note, for the Premier, and I am asking this of the Premier, that Ontario patients are getting their MRIs done at St. Boniface in March, while Manitoba patients, because they are not paying patients, have to wait till July and have to wait up to six months for MRI because they are only operating under a limited time period. Will the Premier do the right thing and expand the operation of the MRI so that people like Mrs. Toderash in Swan River and all those other Manitobans who are not paying clients like the Ontario residents or the MPIC claims and the Workers Compensation claims can get their MRIs done within clinical guidelines?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, this government announced that it was one of our highest priorities in health care to reduce those waiting lists, and therefore we put more money in to reduce these waiting lists in December and again in the budget that was just announced a couple of weeks ago, and that is our firm intention to reduce those waiting lists.

**Mr. Chomiak:** What does the Premier propose that we tell these individuals—we have all written to, we have all contacted the Minister of Health (Mr.

Praznik)—people like Mrs. Toderash who has to wait for her brain tumour to be looked at on the MRI; Ron Berry [phonetic] who has been waiting since November for an ultrasound; Ken Gilliam who must wait until June for an MRI; Brenda Camarat [phonetic] who must wait until the summertime to get her echocardiogram done for her valve problem? What are we supposed to tell these individuals to do while the Premier says they have promised, and they are not extending the operation and the hours of these machines to provide the service to Manitobans?

**Mr. Filmon:** That is precisely what we are doing. I heard the minister say that the additional funding will allow them to extend the time of use, and that involves hiring new staff so that they can expand to longer hours and more days of use of the equipment.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Kildonan, with a final supplementary question.

\* (1420)

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Speaker, I go back to the Premier. How can he explain the fact that the MRI at St. Boniface Hospital presently is operating on limited hours to Manitoba residents, while paying customers like MPIC, Workers Comp and people from Ontario can get in sooner than Manitoba residents because you are not willing to extend those hours immediately?

**Mr. Filmon:** I have just told him that that is precisely what the minister plans to do with the additional money.

#### **Education System Administration**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is also for the Premier. It is dealing with the on-again, off-again, if you like, will to try to have some sort of change in public education in terms of the way in which it is administered. In Alberta you have 480 school trustees for a half million students. In Ontario you have 700 school trustees for 2.1 million students. In Manitoba we have approximately 400 school trustees for 194,000 students. My question is: because the Premier has said in the past that this was a priority, when will the government make the issue of

redistribution a priority and see some tangible action taken to resolve it?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that we identified this as an issue that should be dealt with back, I believe it was in 1990. We initiated there the Norrie commission that spent a couple of years going throughout the province, coming up with comprehensive recommendations as to change in our school boundaries, as well as in the administration of our school system, public school system. Many of his recommendations, I think some 21 recommendations, have been implemented. The implementation of boundary change is something that obviously was greeted with a great deal of opposition by people at the local community level.

Now members opposite would be the first to jump up—if we were to impose a new set of boundaries, they would be the first to jump up and say: why do you not listen to the people. In this case, we have listened to the people, and we have said: here are the benefits of school boundary changes, of amalgamations and reductions in the numbers of school boards, and we are prepared to put money in as an incentive for you to amalgamate school boards. It is up to you to get together now and co-operatively negotiate these new school boundaries and this ability to deliver more efficiently education through our public system in Manitoba.

That process is underway. Some are already committed to amalgamation, and others are looking at it on a co-operative basis. Those negotiations are underway in several other areas of the province. We believe that is ultimately the best way to go, because you need to have the support of the public when you are making such major changes. If the member opposite just wants us to bring down the hammer and do it from the provincial government, please have him stand up and say that and let him take the consequences of that statement, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, what I would like to see is some real tangible action. That has not been the case with respect to this government.

My question to the Premier is: if he is relying on public opinion on this, will the Premier then indicate

that if the will of the public is to see this issue dealt with in a way in which there is some tangible action taken, will he then agree that he will be prepared to take some sort of action, not this over 10 years where we have seen one school board talking to another school board—

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

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I would like to think that part of the reason why we continue to be in office 10 years after we were elected is because we do listen to people. We do work with people. We prefer a co-operative approach as opposed to a confrontative approach. We have tried to do that in everything we have done, and that includes, in this particular case, working with people throughout the province on the area of school board governance and school board boundaries and all of the things that impact on the education of our children.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, regional health boards would probably be a good case in point.

My question to the Premier is: will he then acknowledge that because of this government's approach at dealing with this issue, you have many Manitobans paying a disproportionate amount more of tax dollars to finance public education, because this Premier has failed in dealing with this issue?

**Mr. Filmon:** No, Madam Speaker.

#### **Churchill, Manitoba Regional Health Authority**

**Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland):** Madam Speaker, my questions are for the First Minister as well. When the regional health authorities were set up, Manitobans were told that the results would be improved services and more accessible health care.

I would like to ask the Premier to explain: in the case of Churchill, in a period of one year under their appointed chair and board, they have lost a 25-year contract to supply doctors to the Keewatin region of the N.W.T., but the business that Churchill realizes, almost 80 percent of it comes from the Keewatin region.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understand exactly what the member is after. If he is suggesting that somehow we are responsible for the decision that the Northwest Territories have made to not use to as great an extent the Churchill Health Centre, then I am prepared to answer that, but I am not quite sure I understood what he was getting at.

**Mr. Robinson:** I know the rules of this House, Madam Speaker, do not allow me to go with a lengthy preamble—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. With the indulgence of the House, the honourable member could quickly repeat his question.

**Mr. Robinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the RHAs were set up in the province of Manitoba, it was understood by people in Churchill and throughout Manitoba that it would result in better services, improved health care and so on. We have on this side of the House, in a spirit of co-operation, worked with—I have worked with the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) in trying to address the shortcomings of the regional health authority in Churchill, and obviously, we have not been able to do that. Simply, the board chair of Churchill has not done the negotiating jobs that are needed that go with the regional health authority.

I am asking the Premier if he will remove this chairperson from the regional health authority and make it much more effective where it will be representative of the community of Churchill.

**Mr. Filmon:** Again, I am not sure what it is that the chair has not done properly. If it is to do with the relationships with the Northwest Territories, Madam Speaker, I know that many members on this side of the House have been working with the people of the Northwest Territories. In their move to the new territory of Nunavut, there will be, obviously, a lot of changes that involve their taking responsibility for the delivery of services and their choice of where they get services, and I know that that is a concern.

I have spoken with the head of the Northwest Territorial government, Don Morin, on numerous occasions. He has a history with Manitoba, having lived and worked here. He is very familiar with

relationships with Churchill, and he has been very supportive of us in terms of supply and also in terms of the accessing of medical services.

So, if I could understand better exactly what it is that the member thinks should be done that has not been done, then perhaps I could pursue it with him. I respect the member and his concerns and I would like to help him solve the problem, but just to suggest that we should fire the chair of the board of the regional health authority without having some greater understanding of how that would solve the problem is difficult for me to do.

\* (1430)

**Mr. Robinson:** It is very simple, Madam Speaker. He could perhaps discuss with the MLA for Turtle Mountain, (Mr. Tweed), and I am sure the member for Turtle Mountain will agree with me that there is a definite problem in Churchill. The regional health authority is now losing their pharmacist, their accountant, head nurse. There has been a 98 percent turnover of nurses since the regional health authority took over. Simply, there is a problem that has to be addressed, and I want to ask the Premier what action he will take.

**Mr. Filmon:** I would be happy to ensure that when he returns from his meeting, the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) will respond to that issue and will get involved and make sure that the member for Rupertsland knows just exactly what is being done and what can be done to try and address the circumstances.

#### **Cross Lake, Manitoba Arbitration Award**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the First Minister. The government is speaking in terms of dealing with the Cross Lake community, and the Minister of Northern Affairs is using terms like ethics and justice. I would like to ask the First Minister: why has the government failed to implement the arbitration award that was achieved and written by G. Campbell MacLean and issued on March 17, 1997, an award that was provided pursuant to the Northern Flood Agreement, an award that rules in favour of the Cross Lake community in dealing with

roads and bridges pursuant to the Northern Flood Agreement? Why does the Premier not instruct his minister, who is also the Minister of Hydro, to take the highroad, be a statesperson and settle the arbitration award that has gone against the government twice, rather than appealing it on a third occasion?

**Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs):**

The process underway is the kind of process contemplated by the Northern Flood Agreement of 1977 and that is a claim-by-claim basis. Where there is a lack of clarification, or there is a dispute as to what something means or what the intention was of the agreement, or how to deal with a claim, or how to determine what the facts are and how to determine what the amounts of compensation are, you go to an arbitrator. When the arbitrator makes an award and the decision of the arbitrator is not clear enough or there is a jurisdictional question, you go to courts to have that resolved, and I might say that Premier Schreyer objected to the signing of the NFA agreement, as I understood it, in his day, because there was not an appeal procedure.

**Mr. Doer:** I was in Cross Lake last year, and they feel that they have used the rules of the Northern Flood Agreement on two occasions, and on two occasions they were able to succeed with an independent arbitrator. Now you are going on a third occasion to appeal it. I would ask this question of the Premier (Mr. Filmon): do you not think you should start taking the highroad when you have lost twice, implement the arbitration awards from Mr. MacLean? Why can you not live by the rules of their Northern Flood Agreement and start defusing the situation and concerns in the Cross Lake community instead of inflaming them? Live by the arbitration award instead of appealing it a third time. Come on, stand up.

**Mr. Newman:** Madam Speaker, the difficulty which is underlying that question is, of course, the official opposition through its Leader and through the different members that have spoken on the Cross Lake issue, in particular the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin)—is that at the moment there are serious efforts being made by people of reason and goodwill in trying to come to grips with this.

I include in that my counterpart, the federal minister and the regional director, Loren Cochrane, Grand Chief

Rod Bushie, Grand Chief Francis Flett and many people in the community who are very concerned about this situation. What the opposition party is doing here is simply stirring up trouble at a time when they need reason and good guidance for the members of the community and their sharing of facts.

**Point of Order**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, there he goes again. We are asking a question on the issue of Cross Lake. The question was very clear: will they live up to the award given by the arbitrator on two occasions.

Madam Speaker, for this member once again to use terms like “stirring up trouble” is not only not answering the question but I think it is showing a real contempt for Question Period. I would ask you to have him called to order and answer the very serious question being asked on behalf of the people of Cross Lake.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Yes, Madam Speaker, it is sort of déjà vu all over again with honourable members opposite. Whenever they hear something they do not like, they raise a point of order about it. On this particular occasion, I do not even know if it could be construed as a dispute over the facts, but that would be the most it would be.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Newman:** No, I will just quickly finish my response to the question, if I may. Sorry.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would appeal to all members in this House to use caution both in the tone and the words they use to address each other, both in asking questions and responding to questions, because it becomes very inflamed and does nothing to enhance the members as 57 leaders of this province.

I would also, on the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, request that the honourable minister comply with the rules and respond to the question asked.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, to quickly complete his response.

**Mr. Newman:** The kind of issue that has been raised by the Leader of the official opposition is the kind of matter which can be resolved through discussion and agreement, the kind of discussion and agreement that we are seeking with the members of Cross Lake through their leadership, and that is the kind of issue which is inherent in the 1977 Flood Agreement. Those are the processes that go through. We are trying to achieve a process which is more advantageous for all concerned.

**Mr. Doer:** The government will know that the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) took a very, very co-operative approach in dealing with the issue of flooding on the sacred burial ground of the Cross Lake community, but it is unacceptable for the government to lose once, appeal the decision, lose a second time by an independent arbitrator, and a year later they are still talking about good faith.

Madam Speaker, why will the Premier not instruct his Minister of Northern Affairs and Minister responsible for Hydro (Mr. Newman) to implement the arbitration award that was handed down by Mr. MacLean a year ago as a way of starting to take leadership and fulfilling our responsibilities as a province? Let us start working in partnership, let us start working together instead of in confrontation as the minister opposite is doing.

**Mr. Newman:** I have already answered the question. The answer is simply that a clarification is needed because you cannot implement something that cannot be understood, and that is what the court is there for, to give that guidance. Short of that or the alternative to that is to achieve an agreement through discussion.

### **Winnipeg Beach Hotel Video Lottery Terminals—Reinstallation**

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Reid Kelner, former Tory candidate, is back in the VLT business even though he allowed and encouraged known problem gamblers to play even if they had to, he had to, break the law by providing cash by allowing illegal withdrawals through debit cards, an illegal act as defined by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). The government's response was remove the VLTs. Then it was, you can have them back in six months. Now, less than three months later, Kelner is back in business.

My question to the Minister responsible for the Gaming Commission: how does this minister justify giving back the VLTs to Kelner when only a month ago even the Finance minister, who we know is hooked on VLTs, openly believed that a severe punishment was needed? Was Kelner's politics a factor in this decision?

\* (1440)

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

**Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act):** Madam Speaker, we have legislation in this House which has appointed an independent Gaming Commission, and this Gaming Commission was called for—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** The member for St. James seems to find something funny in the answer which I am attempting to give to the House.

I feel this is a very serious issue today before this House. The Desjardins report that was called for by this House recommended an independent Gaming Commission, and in compliance with that suggestion in that report, this government instituted legislation which called for and created a Gaming Commission. We set up the Gaming Commission. The Gaming Commission has reviewed the facts, conducted an inquiry and they have made a conclusion which is independent of this government.



If my honourable colleague opposite is suggesting that we politically interfere with the conclusion of the Gaming Commission, I would reject that soundly. The member opposite may not like the answer given by the Gaming Commission. There may be members on this side that may not like the answer given by the Gaming Commission, but I think the important issue here is that there has been a process created. We have followed the process, and we have the answer which has been given to the community, and we must follow that.

**Ms. Mihychuk:** Is the minister trying to deny that members of that Gaming Commission made personal donations to the minister's own political campaign? Is this government—

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

**Ms. Mihychuk:** I did not quite finish my—this guy was a Tory candidate.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the question was put to me in a facetious fashion or not, but I can tell the honourable member opposite that the two individuals who sat on this fact-finding commission was one Claudia Weselake and the second member was one Joan Montgomery. I can assure the honourable member opposite that these are both well-qualified and skilled members of our community that have the confidence of this government, have continued to retain the confidence of this government and they had nothing to do with my campaign.

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Action Daycare

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** Madam Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to visit Action daycare with the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, the Minister of Family Services. Our

government has committed an additional \$5.1 million to ensure that children and families in Manitoba are provided with flexible and quality child care. Our government listened to the parents who use our daycare system. We listened to the daycare providers who work in the system, and together we have improved the system.

Our government will now spend \$48.3 million in 1998-99 on daycare. We will now be providing an additional 1,000 subsidized spaces to families. They will now have the ability to choose the daycare that best meets their needs, and 2,000 existing infant and preschool spaces will now be fully funded. Operating grants for the infant and preschool spaces in the centres and family daycare homes will increase by 2 percent. We will also be providing an additional \$197,000 to extend the children with disabilities program to all nonprofit facilities. Also, an additional \$200,000 will be provided for the development of new flexible child care arrangements.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Family Services for providing me with the opportunity to participate in the fact-finding mission of Manitoba daycares. I would also like to thank the daycares and families for their co-operation, and I would also like to thank the regulatory review committee for their research and assistance in compiling the information gathered in the fact-finding mission.

Madam Speaker, our government turned to the experts. Those experts are the people who work in daycare day after day. We asked them to work with us and find out how operations could be more efficient. We understood the necessities of those people who are being part of the decision-making process. We will continue to make Manitoba a great place to live, work, invest, and especially raise a family.

### Nova Scotia Election

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the NDP caucus, I rise to congratulate the voters of Nova Scotia on an exciting and historic election last Tuesday, March 24. It was a massive, although not unexpected, breakthrough for the New Democrats who went from four seats to 19, tying the tired, ineffectual Liberals and relegating the equally

tired and ineffective Tories to third place. The results were not only a repudiation of a tired, old-style government but also a message that government has to represent the best interests of all the people. Government must provide for and protect the public health care system, the public education system, and the future for all our families.

The Nova Scotia NDP built upon the solid base established by Alexa McDonough who, when she left Nova Scotia politics to lead the federal NDP, was heralded as the "best Premier Nova Scotia never had." Alexa's provincial and federal leadership resulted in an unprecedented six Nova Scotia seats for the NDP in last May's federal election and set the stage for Tuesday's historic election.

Robert Chisholm and the other 18 members of the NDP caucus will be a powerful, effective voice for all Nova Scotians. I hope all members of the Manitoba Legislature will join with us in congratulating the Nova Scotia New Democrats and wishing them luck in the exciting times ahead.

\* (1450)

#### AECL—Future Status

**Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye):** I rise today, in part, to address some of the comments made by the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) here in the House yesterday.

The federal government has hindered efforts to commercialize the Whiteshell laboratories in Pinawa, increasing the uncertainty of the workers at the lab. The federal government has not responded to requests made by our Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) for meetings to discuss the impending prices facing the Whiteshell laboratories.

During the fall session of 1996, I introduced a nonpartisan, private member's resolution that called on the federal government to provide a long-term commitment to the Whiteshell laboratories. We wanted to show the federal government Manitoba's united commitment for the Whiteshell labs. However, the NDP refused to pass that motion or that resolution. Despite the comments they made about the importance

of the facility to our economy, when the time came to give their support, the NDP abandoned the people of Pinawa and the affected workers at AECL.

Now, Madam Speaker, no one in this House or in this province is surprised when members opposite use people, such as the workers of the AECL, for their own shallow, political benefit. Comments made by the member for St. James illustrate that practice when she spoke here yesterday. The phoney concern presented by the NDP yesterday in this House can be characterized in a nice manner, I might add, as words without substance. The commercialization of the Whiteshell laboratories is the responsibility of the federal government. Our government stands ready to implement an economic development plan, as announced in December of 1996, as soon as the federal government lives up to its commitments.

I encourage an immediate meeting with the federal minister of natural resources, as was requested by our Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Thank you.

#### Northern Manitoba

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Earlier today we saw the kind of contempt that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province continues to show for northern Manitobans. I might add it is ironic that this Premier is the Premier who has been sighted less in northern Manitoba than sightings of Elvis. I mean, this is a Premier who has not been in my community, the community of Thompson, since before the last election when he talked to the Tory faithful—has barely been seen in an aboriginal community in northern Manitoba. I think, in fact, the last time he was anywhere in the North was at a Chamber of Commerce meeting in The Pas. He has spent more time in Davos, Switzerland, than he has in northern Manitoba. He is not a Premier that has any right to talk about the North.

I want to list some of the record of 10 years of neglect of this government. This is the kind of record that has led people in the North to reject the Conservatives time and time again. This is a record that talks about cuts to the Access programs, to New Careers, cuts to job creation programs. They even cut the program that provided swimming for young people, and water safety training. They cut northern hospitals,

they implemented the \$50 user fee, they cut our public schools, like the school district of Mystery Lake, more than anywhere else in the province.

They have had a terrible record on highways. We had as little as 5 percent of the construction budget, and our roads are not even worthy of being called highways in many cases. In fact, the Highways minister himself has admitted they were built only to pioneer standards. They cut the friendship centres, they cut MKO, they cut pretty well everything that moves in northern Manitoba.

You know, they talk about dealing in good faith. We see what age they live in. They live in the days of the 1890s, Madam Speaker, when the Indian agents went around northern Manitoba talking like the great white father. That kind of condescending and patronizing attitude is no longer acceptable. I say to the Premier, if he ever did bother to come to northern Manitoba, I will take you to the communities like Nelson House, where I believe six people voted Conservative compared to 200 for the New Democrats.

In Split Lake, six people voted for the Conservatives compared to 200 for the New Democrats. People of northern Manitoba voted. They said this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this government does not represent them.

#### **Education System—Administration**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I just wanted to continue on with the question that I had asked the Premier earlier today. What I was hoping to be able to see come from the government is some sort of a commitment to fairness. It is not necessarily to take a side per se but to acknowledge that we have many inequities that are there today in the way in which we administer our public education. So, if you are going to allow some citizens, for example, of the province to have more community-oriented school divisions, well, that same principle should also be allowed for all Manitobans. You cannot have one megaboard here and this small school division over here unless, of course, that is the will of what those actual people want.

If that is in fact the direction the government wants to take public education, then at least they should be on the record clearly demonstrating that. If in fact they want to look at a way of reducing the overall

administration of school divisions, going towards the Norrie report, on which hundreds of thousands of tax dollars were spent, then they should show that by their actions.

I am disappointed that the government has not acted in any sort of tangible way in dealing with that, primarily because, whether it is the quality of service being delivered in different school divisions as a result of size or it is the extra cost that some Manitobans have to pay over and above other Manitobans because of the school division in which they live, it is not fair. I would appeal to the government to acknowledge the fact that the current system is not fair and for the government to take action to rectify it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**Madam Speaker:** As previously agreed, the House will resolve itself into Committee of Supply. The House will resume in Committee of Supply.

#### **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

##### **Interim Supply**

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** The committee will come back to order.

Could I ask the members who want to carry on a conversation to do so quietly. It is a little noisy in here right now.

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** I just have a couple of quick issues I want to raise with the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer), and it is related to this government's attempts to deal with its problem with vacancy rates in its MHA properties. I know it has been struggling with this for a number of years. I am waiting for the minister to tell me how much money he is losing per month, because they are still having to pay the taxes and the maintenance and all the costs related to those units, but they are not able to fill them. I know that they have done a few things that I think are not going to be helpful in terms of raising the rents and now this new policy on rent arrears. But I actually want to offer the minister a couple of positive suggestions and

to see if he will do a couple of things that I think would be helpful in having him fill his vacancies.

I have met with a few community groups, and one of the things that I want to draw the minister's attention to is I think that if he would take the time to meet with community groups like the International Centre, who can place as many as a hundred new tenants who are new Canadians per month—some months they have more than a hundred new Canadians that they have to find housing for in the province, mostly in Winnipeg—and they have a couple of suggestions that were discussed in meetings that I had with members. I want to see if the minister would seriously consider taking action on these.

The first is that they would provide lists of where the vacant properties are to agencies like the International Centre on a regular basis, at least monthly, so that the staff can assist potential tenants with selecting these potential units and picking the ones that they would like to see.

The second part of it that they are requesting is that the minister would consider changing the policy of Manitoba Housing to only show a potential tenant one unit. If they could look at a couple of units, I think that would also help tenants make a choice and not feel that they are in this take-it-or-leave-it position, and I think again that would help them fill some of their vacancies.

\* (1500)

Lastly, if they would also designate one staffperson with Manitoba Housing Authority that would liaise with some of these communities groups like the International Centre, so that they can develop a relationship with one staffperson. I know that the minister has not filled all of the tenant-relations positions that are available through his department, and one of these types of positions, the tenant-relations positions, would be a good kind of contact that could send out the lists of the vacant units, that could take questions from this type of agency, the International Centre, and I really think that an agency like that could place quite a few tenants on a regular basis with Manitoba Housing Authority properties. They often have a situation where they want to place tenants in mid-month, which provides more of a problem I think in private accommodations and the market, and that is another issue that they want to see addressed.

So I would like to hear the minister's response if he thinks these are positive, good suggestions and if he can see his department acting on them.

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** Mr. Chairperson, this is indeed a unique situation. I think, as the member is aware, what you have at the International Centre is you have the coming together of two very strong personalities that are more or less the spearhead at the International Centre and that is a Mr. Marty Dolin and a Mr. Tom Denton. Mr. Marty Dolin is known for his involvement over the years with the NDP party, and Mr. Tom Denton has been known over the years to be very involved with the Conservative Party. But they work very well together, and they do excellent work for the International Centre.

I have from time to time been involved with some of their events. I have talked individually with them. I know of their commitment, and I know of their involvement, and it is a sense that their political differences and their backgrounds do not come into their judgments of what is good for the International Centre.

I will say that just as the member for Radisson and myself have different political differences, I think that this is something that we can come together and work together with also. I think the suggestion that she has made is excellent, the idea of providing the lists and the idea of not limiting the showing of units just to one area, and the fact of assigning a staffperson is an excellent idea, and I will certainly work towards those ends, because I believe that is one way that we can try to accommodate some of those people that are in need coming through the International Centre, because they do provide a very excellent service to the community.

If there is a way that you get personalities like Marty Dolin and Tom Denton together, I am sure that there is way that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) and the member for Niakwa can do the same thing and try to accommodate these people, so I will certainly take those suggestions and work on those.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I thank the minister for his openness to those suggestions. I have one other issue I want to raise with him quickly, and that is a letter that he received on February 9, '98, from a Mr. Rudy Blanchette and Bill

Peters, Ken Simpson and Alasdair MacGillivray. These people are concerned with the government's legislation passed last session, Bill 60, the amendment to The Elderly and Infirm Persons' Housing Act, which allowed for the grandfathering of an exemption on life-lease buildings to not pay their school tax.

I guess this is one of the times when here in the opposition we are saying we told you so. We told you that this bill was a problem. We recommended you hoist it and you consult more with seniors, with the community, with a lot of the other groups that are developing housing. Now we have a petition that is attached to this letter of a number of seniors that are saying this is not fair, that their condos they are purchasing are of equal value or sometimes even less than the properties that have been grandfathered under this legislation, so I just want to ask the minister how he is going to respond to this letter and to these petitioners.

I know that he met with them last week. I know that there was staff there from his department that were very concerned about the issues that were raised. They have itemized seven very specific questions they want answers to, and I think that some of the comments that we made when we debated this bill was that the minister is opening a big can of worms with this one, so I would like to hear how they are going to deal with this.

**Mr. Reimer:** The member is alluding to the legislation that was introduced last session in which there were limitations placed on the size of units that are classified under The EIPH Act. The reason for the introduction of that legislation was the fact that what we have seen in the proliferation of housing in the last little while is what we call life-lease units that are being built.

The original intent of The EIPH Act was to address the availability of people in need in seniors living within a fixed income to an extent where they could not afford accommodations, so The EIPH Act would give them the relief for school taxes. There was criteria that was set up under that act which goes back, I believe, into the 1950s when it was first brought forth.

What it indicated was that it was based on square-footage size. It was also based on income and rental as

a percentage of their income. At that time, I believe it was 20 percent of their income plus the square footage. As units have increased in size now through the life-lease program, where you have units that are upwards of 1,400, 1,600, 1,800 square feet, they are not necessarily classified as—and their pricing can run up to anywhere between \$100,000 to almost \$200,000, \$175,000 for some of these units.

This is not really what you might call units for people in dire straits that are in for seniors housing. To not make any movement on that, what we are doing is we are encouraging people to get into these life-lease units under The EIPH Act and not pay any school tax which is disproportionate to the income and the amount of monies that everybody else is paying on their school tax.

So what the amendment brought forth last year, it restricted the sizes of new construction only. Under the existing legislation that was passed last year—pardon me. Existing units under the legislation that was passed last year would be still grandfathered or would stay within The EIPH Act, so there should be no apprehension for people that are currently covered under The EIPH Act, that we are going to rescind that classification for them. It will only apply to new buildings, new units that are being built, that they have to comply within those square-footage guidelines if they want to apply for an EIPH Act. So there should be no—

### Point of Order

**Ms. Cerilli:** Mr. Chairperson, I just want you to call the minister to order, so he will deal with the specifics of the question I raised. He is going into a lot of detail about extraneous matters on this topic.

I am wanting to know when are you going to respond to the letter that was sent to you on February 9 of this year. You met with this group last week. Let us not revisit your debate on the bill last session.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Reimer:** No, no point of order, just a reply.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In that case, I will rule the honourable member did have a point of order. I would like the honourable minister to be a little bit more relevant to the answers.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister, to continue.

**Mr. Reimer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I will respond to that as soon as I have contacted my office and find out—it must be, for lack of a better word, in the system, and I have not seen a reply that has come forth, so it will be as soon as possible.

\* (1510)

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Mr. Chairperson, I have a few questions for the Minister of Housing.

I have had calls and letters, and I have written to the Minister of Housing with respect to side-by-side properties in my constituency of Transcona. I have listed for the minister information, and, in fact, I have gone out to see these homes personally. There are basement windows that are missing, basement walls that are leaking water into the inside of the building, causing deterioration of the property of the residents that are living there. The siding on the outside of the house has shifted and fallen down in one particular case. In another case, the doors are falling off the building. The building has not been painted in a dozen years. The fences are, well, you might as well say they are nonexistent.

So it appears to me from what I am seeing in my own community—I am not sure about other communities, but in my community, your Department of Housing has not undertaken a repair program to keep these buildings in good shape, and when I say good shape, in the sense of just general maintenance practices.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing what plans you have for this year to rejuvenate some of those properties to make sure that they are put back into what I would consider to be habitable conditions.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the member for Transcona, he has alluded that he has written to me on

this particular piece of property. I do not have the correspondence in front of me, but if he is willing to give me the address of those units, I will see that they have been looked at, because in all our normal course of action, we try to get back to the member within a very reasonable time as to the course of action and the follow-up that is implemented by the department.

If nothing has happened, I am very surprised, because I have a fair amount of confidence in and a great amount of respect for my department in the following up of any type of inquiry, whether it is for conditions of units, problems with tenants or problems with trying to get people into our units, because we are a service-orientated department and we try to service our clients and the people in the most efficient and most expedient way.

If there is a problem, I am glad that the member has pointed it out to me, because I will certainly follow up on that on his behalf.

**Mr. Reid:** Well, Mr. Chairperson, I have written to the minister, I believe, three times on this one particular property on the corner of Dowling and Wayoata in Transcona. Mrs. Jackson is the resident in that particular building, and she has graciously let me into her home on her invitation to see the condition of the property, and the information I put on the record here a few moments ago are my observations of that particular property. That is why I wrote to the minister, and to this point not much has happened to improve the condition of that property. The siding on the outside which is stucco siding around the door entrance to the side-by-side property has shifted downward, and I am afraid for the safety of anybody walking along the sidewalk for that particular property. The basement windows, you might as well say they are nonexistent. They are letting water into the basement area which is causing the deterioration of the inside of the structure itself, and there are other problems internal to that particular building.

I have drawn that to the minister's attention. Outside of the residents doing some minor repairs themselves for which the department has reimbursed the residents, not much else has happened by way of maintenance from his department. So I have drawn it to your attention in a letter before.

At the other end of that same block on Dowling, there are also properties that I believe are the property holdings of the Department of Housing in similar condition, fences falling apart, snow-covered doors in the house, in the kitchen area, and there is just a general state of disrepair of these buildings, no paint on them for at least a decade. At least a decade these buildings have not been painted, so it is just deplorable conditions for the properties for which your department is responsible, and I draw it to your attention.

I have raised it in the past with previous ministers of Housing, but I hope that this Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) will take a look at it, because the asset itself is depreciating in value by lack of maintenance on those properties, and whatever you plan for the future of those properties, your maintenance will have an impact on the decisions that you are going to make, and if you are not going to repair them, then, of course, you are going to have substandard housing conditions for the people who are living there, and at the same time whatever other plans you might have for those housings, of course the value of them will drop; so it is living conditions for the people and also the value of the asset itself.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing with respect to another property in the constituency of Transcona. I believe it is 30 Wynford Drive, and it is my understanding that the residents there have just received their renewal notices for their lease. I want to ask the minister why, under this particular new arrangement, his department is now having a surcharge of \$5 for every resident who is living in that particular facility who has a balcony when that charge has never been there in the past.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the information that the member for Transcona has brought forth to me regarding a balcony, I am not familiar with that, whether that is a difference or a change in policy, but I will certainly follow up with that on his behalf and try to get back to him in a very short time on that.

**Mr. Reid:** I thank the minister for that. I hope he will respond in a short time because the residents of that particular facility have called my office and have indicated to me that some of them have been there for a number of years and they have never seen it in their

lease agreements before, that your Department of Housing would be charging for a balcony.

If you take a look at the building structure itself, every suite on the outside of that building has a balcony, so every one of them is getting the \$5 surcharge added to them when it has never been added before, so I do not know if your department is trying to nickel and dime these particular individuals and their families. Many of them are single moms living there with their children, and you are taking another \$5 a month out of their pocket to charge them for the balcony.

So I do not understand why the department is making that decision, but that is the information that has been related to me by the residents of the structure, and I hope the minister, when he goes back to his department, will check into that decision, and if you are indeed doing that, that you will rescind that policy decision because the residents have said that if that is the case, find me a suite internal to the building where you do not have a balcony and I will be glad to move in there and you can charge somebody else the five bucks, but they are not willing to pay that extra five considering that in all those cases they are on what we would consider a fixed income, many of them on social assistance.

So I leave that with the minister for his investigation, and, hopefully, he will forward along some background on his research to me, so that I might provide an answer to my constituents.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, I will, thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I do have a number of questions that I could be asking, and I would go to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) and maybe ask him in two parts. I know he is the minister responsible for Housing and Urban Affairs. I do have questions in both areas.

First, I would acknowledge the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) for putting in excellent efforts at assisting me and the tenants association over at Gilbert Park, trying to make tenant management work. With all modesty, I do believe that there has been a considerable

amount of success, and I would acknowledge that that success would not be possible had it not been for the co-operation of the minister. On behalf of the tenants over at Gilbert Park, I would acknowledge that, and even his predecessor who put in a considerable amount of effort also.

Having said that, I am going to stay away from that aspect of asking questions. What I want to focus some attention on is, a couple of years ago the government came up with a program for trying to get more construction brought into Manitoba in home improvements. I studied at one time urban affairs at the University of Winnipeg, and one of the things that was really important to me was to recognize the negatives of urban decay. A major part of urban decay has been one's housing stock. I have always believed that the government has to pay special attention to housing stock in the province of Manitoba, and I have always believed that there is a role for government to ensure that at least there is something that is always happening in that whole area.

One of the reasons why I had gotten involved in the residents association a number of years back was to try to get an older community, in this case it was Weston, to try to get people to invest more of their private dollars tapping into programs like the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. At one time it used to be a fairly healthy program. You will find if we went through the records that Weston benefited tremendously by a program like that.

\* (1520)

Mr. Chairperson, the reason why I bring that up right now is that I do believe that we need to be more progressive in coming up with construction, revitalization type of programs in the housing area. I am not as convinced that we need to have programs like NIP from many years ago, Neighbourhood Improvement Programs. I am more concerned, especially when the economy is doing relatively well, that we concentrate the efforts on programs that will get some of the areas in which maybe one is on a fixed income, or it is a lower end, in terms of the wage scale, these individuals will have some sort of an incentive or some sort of assistance in upgrading the housing stock in the community in which they live.

I am interested in just hearing the minister's comments as to how he believes, let us say, renovations of homes in older areas fit into his plans.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the member for Inkster, when he first started his line of questioning brought up the matter of Gilbert Park Residents Association. He is being a little bit modest in his accolades to our government, because a lot of it was initiated by himself in his role as the MLA who represents Inkster. It was through a lot of his dedication and hard work—not only with me but also with the former minister—that he persisted in trying to set up a program at Gilbert Park. So he has been involved, and now the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee) has also indicated that possibly we should be doing the same thing at Lord Selkirk Park.

I think there is a lot of room for this type of initiative. These are the types of things that can grow in the community as positive aspects for the betterment of a safe and friendly community. Gilbert Park has certainly turned out to be an ongoing adventure, if you want to call it, because as we delegate more and more authority to them, there is more and more of a maturity and a sense of community that is taking place in that particular area of the riding of Inkster. I thank the member for his comments.

The member has mentioned about neighbourhood revitalization, and I think that is something that this government has taken to heart quite seriously in the city of Winnipeg, because there is a recognition that the more a neighbourhood is made safe and more compatible to the living standards that we expect from our community that it is safer not only for the families, but it is safer for the neighbourhood, and it fosters a sense of accomplishment that the people can take pride in.

That is one of the reasons why we have continually supported the City of Winnipeg financially with what we call the MWCRP program, which is the Manitoba-Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program. I cannot off the top of my head say exactly how much money we have spent in the last while, but I believe the number is somewhere around \$6 million that has been put into various areas of the city of Winnipeg.



One of the thrusts of that program has been for neighbourhood revitalization and the enhancement of community structures and community involvement areas, where there is positive growth, positive results, by getting the community involved, by working with the local communities, giving them the ability to make decisions and being a catalyst in the sense of providing some funding through our government to enhance these communities. Some of the communities that have benefited from that has been, I believe, the area of Fort Rouge, the area of Elmwood. Some of the other areas that have also benefited have also shown some positive upgrading, and a lot of it has to do with the community getting involved. So there is a program, to an extent, that has proven to be quite beneficial in the city of Winnipeg.

The idea of upgrading housing on an individual basis is something that we were involved with the Home Renovation Program, which generated spinoffs of almost \$80-million worth of investment on reconstruction, if you want to call it, of housing through the program. That program was discontinued; I believe it was just over a year ago. Whether it will be reinstated is a matter of further consideration of budget limitations, so we do not have that program available right now.

But we do have a program under Manitoba Housing called the HELP program which is the home renovation program for seniors and people on fixed income, where there are loans available for up to \$3,000. It is a 10-year loan, it is interest-free, and we have made that program available for seniors and for people of low income to renovate their homes. It is something that we can work towards.

We have the Winnipeg Development Agreement that we can look at housing for high-risk groups. We have an allocation of funding that is available through that. We are presently looking at applications and the processing of applications for housing assistance along those lines, so there is the availability of funding through that.

The member is aware of a program that the City of Winnipeg just extended. In fact, I believe it was just yesterday that they extended the program for another year, the home improvement tax incentive grant which

has an incentive for infill housing in the core area, of a greater need and in a greater proportion of funding, tax credit availability from it. So the City of Winnipeg has seen that there is the availability of trying to get infill housing in the city of Winnipeg.

I believe there are still other areas that should and could be explored through inner city housing. One of the things that possibly the City of Winnipeg—my correspondence and conversations with them has been to try to look at some of the existing wonderful heritage buildings we have in the city of Winnipeg and try to utilize them for some sort of housing component for further utilization. I know that they have just recently announced the heritage tax credit program for heritage buildings, and that was legislation that we introduced and passed two years ago at the city's request and they finally implemented it.

So that is an excellent program that I think can be utilized for not only some of the heritage buildings but also for the fact of bringing in additional housing in the loft units or on the second floors or third floors of some of these wonderful old buildings that are downtown, because there is niche marketing and there is niche availability of housing that people look for in certain areas, who want to be downtown. It is the attractiveness, it is the affordability, primarily, of trying to use these buildings and these facilities, that we can get better utilization for housing downtown.

I continually work with the city and encourage them to look at innovative ways they can use these, and these are some of the things that I think are positive aspects that we can work at. It is not an end solution yet, but I think it is going down the road to something that is a lot better for Winnipeg and a lot better for the core area of the city.

I encourage the member for Inkster just as he said that he had taken urban studies a while ago. I believe the instructor at that time was a Mr. Axworthy, and I believe that his continual contact with that gentleman would help, actually benefit Winnipeg and Manitoba because of his close relationship with the individual, that he could possibly look at federal intervention and federal funding that we can also utilize for some of the funding in Winnipeg.

\* (1530)

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Yes, indeed, it would be nice to see a sense of co-operation in the sense of a program that would be all-encompassing, not only, let us say, for the city of Winnipeg but for many of the rural communities that are in Manitoba. I say that knowing the minister across the way is also very interested in rural areas. [interjection] Well, actually I have a little bit of rural Manitoba in my riding too, a couple of farms. I do have a couple of farms. [interjection] I am very proud of the area I represent. Let us just leave it at that.

Mr. Chairperson, the type of a program that I think would be beneficial would be one that could, in fact, be implemented province-wide, one that would see benefits for smaller rural communities that have older housing stock, to urban areas, not only the core of Winnipeg, if you like.

I would use the area, for example, of Mynarski, Shaughnessy Park, Northwood, the Westons, the Brooklands, the oldest parts of St. Vital, Crescentwood, all over, where we have housing stock that—for example, maybe it is windows, and if the government was to provide a program and provide incentives for individuals to tap into so that they can get windows replaced, much more energy—and I am not talking computers here—that you would see by having these older neighbourhoods invest in programs of this nature or look at programs of this nature and take advantage of programs of this nature, you will see very quickly that people in the communities will, in fact, be that much better off, and that, in itself, adds to the community life. That brings more people participating, gives a higher sense of pride.

I can recall, for example, at one time I used to live on Logan Avenue, and on Alexander, we had about four or five completely dilapidated houses. A couple of them were completely levelled. We had a couple of infill houses come up. Some residential rehabilitation assistance program applications were processed, and now that particular block looks quite nice whereas before, it was perceived as an area in which no one would want to even walk down the back lane because of the dangers. You know, there was a tarp for a roof.

Well, Mr. Chairperson, that is one of the extremes, I guess. What I am looking for is that we do not

necessarily need to wait for more and more communities to look like that, that, in fact, what we should be doing is much like we have annual programs like SAFER and SAFFR as assistance for those individuals on low income that they can tap into, so that they can have only a certain portion of their income going towards rent.

Well, I would suggest what we need, Mr. Chairperson, is, in fact, a program that is put into place that is there. It is not brought in and about for a special throne speech debate or because we might be getting closer to an election or anything of that nature. It should be a permanent part of the Department of Housing in which incentives and programs are developed to try to encourage individuals to invest in their homes in older areas. By doing that, I would ultimately argue that we will be saving communities into the future. By doing that, I believe in long-term costs, we will see some benefits.

That is very easily said, I recognize that, but I think that if we had some study—one of the professors I had was Professor Carter over at the institute and Professor Leo. They very clearly demonstrated, at least in my mind, the benefits of having revitalization occurring on an ongoing basis in our older communities, that the cost, if we want to try to change that community, once it has hit a certain point, is much, much greater. I think that we can prevent that, and the only way we can prevent that is if, in fact, we see a more progressive way of dealing with issues such as revitalization.

I just wanted to more so get on the record with that. I did want to venture into the other area that the minister is responsible for, and that is Urban Affairs. I did have other questions for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Health (Mr. Praznik) or Education (Mrs. McIntosh), if any of them are, in fact, available. I know the government Whip is there, and I say it, so hopefully he heard that.

But, Mr. Chairperson, having said that, with respect to the Capital Region, I, once again, have thought, you know, the structure on paper looks wonderful. In reality, I do not think that it has been successful. I would challenge to see something that has come out of the Capital Region that shows that there is a very strong focus for the development of the entire region. I know

we have had some plans, but I really have not, in my opinion—and a great example of that, and the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae) would be aware of this one, was the landfill. I really believe that the Capital Region could have and should have played a leading role in that, but because it did not do that, in my opinion, we have a situation where we had three landfill sites servicing a population of less than 700,000 people.

Mr. Chairperson, I think that in the future we should be relying more on the Capital Region. When we hear about Winnport, for example, and the potential at Winnport, municipalities like Rosser and the city of Winnipeg and other municipalities, it is critical that we have a plan that takes into consideration what is going to be happening, because the entire Capital Region benefits. In fact, the entire province benefits with something like Winnport, but there needs to be that co-ordinated approach.

We have seen the city try to address the whole issue of people leaving the city to build out in rural Manitoba, and I had an interesting phrase—and I do not know if I have mentioned this before inside the Chamber or if the minister has ever heard of it before. I was out in rural Manitoba when someone coined the phrase of “urbanite,” and “urbanite” is someone who enjoys both living in the rural area and the urban area and works or spends a good portion of the time in the city of Winnipeg, but has that family time, if you like, out in rural Manitoba where they have their home and so forth. So they see the benefits of both lifestyles.

But, in my opinion—and I do not discredit all the benefits of living in rural Manitoba or the benefits of living in an urban centre—but what I do emphasize is that there is a problem that the city of Winnipeg has been having with respect to the whole property tax issue, with respect to competing in some of those rural satellite communities, and as opposed to maybe seeing more co-operation in some of that development. Mr. Chairperson, again, I would think that the Capital Region should be playing more of a role in how that is happening, so that we are all playing on somewhat of an equal playing field.

So I am interested in hearing the minister's comments with respect to the Capital Region board and what he

feels the future role of that particular board should be, and he can feel free to comment, as I have, on how effective he believes that board has been in past years.

\* (1540)

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the member alludes to a fair amount of different scenarios and questions in his comments there. The Capital Region Strategy, the Capital Region commission, the Capital Region itself, I believe is a very useful and a very positive initiative to come to resolve of problems and situations in the resolving between the City of Winnipeg and the surrounding municipalities and also between the municipalities that are surrounding the city of Winnipeg.

The Capital Region Committee is structured so that it provides for a forum. I am of the opinion, and I believe it is conducive to thinking that the best way to try to solve problems is to have a forum or a playing field where individuals can get together and discuss and recognize where there is a common front, where there is a common need, where there is a common area of solution within themselves to come to new directions and solutions of a problem. I would rather work within a sense of co-operation and consensus building without coming to conflict or working on criticisms between the various communities as they look for solutions. The Capital Region Strategy is that vehicle, and it is there to be used.

The member has alluded to its inaction or its nondirection, as he may have alluded to, but we have to remember that the Capital Region Committee is relatively young in its existence. It has only become a part of government philosophy and policy in the last three years. In 1996, when it first started to meet on a regular basis, there was a direction and there was a recognition that a lot of things could be accomplished by the Capital Region Strategy. One of the things that was alluded to by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was the fact that there was a land management waste study conducted within the Capital Region. It came out with some very positive and some very knowledgeable recommendations and observations that a lot of the municipalities were not aware of until there was this land management study that was done. There were a lot of municipalities that were looking at

possibly redeveloping their landfill sites. There were municipalities that were talking about establishing new landfill sites.

*Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair*

The study provided an overview and an exposure to what was in the region, where there was the possibility of other municipalities sharing the landfills or not even getting involved with landfills and having someone else look after the use of their facilities. So that was a very positive initiative and that was within the first year of the formation of the Capital Region Strategy.

Last year, granted, the Capital Region did not meet, but last year, I guess, as we all know was a very, very exceptional year with the flood. It affected every municipality in the Capital Region, some very, very drastically and some to an extent that it was not that severe. So the idea of getting together during 1997—during the flood or before or after—and that year proved to be near impossible because of the fact that the municipalities were just so busy that they just could not get together.

Since that time, in 1998, we recognized that we now have a chance to build upon that sense of co-operation and consensus building with the Capital Region that we have had three meetings, two on the task force side and one with the Capital Region with all the members. The meetings at that time were to form a new direction, if you want to call it, a new *raison d'être* for the Capital Region, and that was under strong leadership by the provincial government to try to find out how we can start to implement a lot of the strategies that are recommended in the Capital Region Strategy.

The recommendation which was passed unanimously at the meeting just over a week ago was that a five-member panel be appointed which would go out into the communities, talk to the elected officials, get their views, their concerns, their directions, their problems, their solutions, talk to the people in the city of Winnipeg, the elected officials, work with the elected officials to find out where there is this commonality of purpose and this direction that the Capital Region should be going, also at the same time, talking to the public to get the public feedback into the scenario of

coming back with a report or direction for consideration.

I think that is a very positive initiative, because we have seen that there is an uncertainty to a degree that there is a wanting by the municipalities and the city of Winnipeg to come to an understanding that we as a Capital Region have a tremendous strength of working together in trying to make Manitoba and Winnipeg one of the best places to live, to work and to raise a family. To work in co-operation and to work towards a common goal of working as a region can only enhance Manitoba, can only enhance Winnipeg. If you have a strong Manitoba, you have a strong Winnipeg, and vice versa, if there is a strong Winnipeg, you get a strong Manitoba. So we are of the opinion that the Capital Region Strategy and the direction that has been implemented in co-operation with the municipalities and the city of Winnipeg has some very positive outlooks and positive perspectives that we can grow upon for all of Manitoba, and particularly, for the Capital Region.

Rural Manitoba has shown that they are growing at a very significant and a very noticeable pace. We just have to look at some of the expansions and some of the new growth and the aftermarket that has been happening in rural Manitoba. So everybody should be benefiting from this, but the best way to benefit from it is to recognize the strength in co-operating and working together.

So the Capital Region really is a very, very powerful mechanism for this to come about. I am very optimistic that this is the direction, and we are going to see some positive initiatives coming out of this.

As the member has alluded, it is a newer format. The format for the Capital Region Strategy is only three years old, but in looking at a lot of the planning and studying of some of the major urban areas right across North America, three years is a very, very short time. We are on the cutting edge of doing a lot of things here in Manitoba for the betterment of Manitobans, and working within the Capital Region Strategy, I believe, has got a tremendous opportunity for Manitoba and Winnipeg and the Capital Region to really shine above a lot of the other areas right across Canada and North America because North America and the world is our

market. So the more that we can bring ourselves together and focus our attentions, the better it is for everybody and particularly for Manitoba.

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Mr. Chairperson, I have a couple of questions that I would first like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources, who has been patient in waiting here.

The issue that I want to discuss for a short time is the capture of elk. Earlier this year, the government made an announcement that First Nations would be the ones who would be doing the capturing for the government, then they changed their mind and the wildlife management committee of the Swan River Valley was given the responsibility of deciding who would do the capturing of the elk.

I want to ask the minister whether he feels that his government has fulfilled the commitment that they made to First Nations that they would be the ones that would have the responsibility of capturing elk for this season.

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Yes, if I understood the first part of the question correctly relating to the input from the management board in the Swan River Valley as related to sites for capture of elk and what the implications might be for the First Nations in that respect, is that the direction the member was going with her question? Because Natural Resources in all cases retained the right for final approval where a trap would be located, and we exercised that authority in a couple of ways, but generally it was a co-operative arrangement.

We also at the same time, as the member indicated, have allowed—allowed is the wrong word. We made an agreement with the First Nations Assembly of Chiefs to also run a capture, but there, as well, final decisions as to where the site would be located was Natural Resources.

I also indicated, and I think this is maybe where the problem or question is flowing from, that in all cases where a private landowner was involved, his rights would not be impeded if he did not want to have a capture on his property. We were not interested in

anything other than a co-operative arrangement where there was private land involved.

\* (1550)

I am not sure if this is where the question was headed, but there was certainly some concern expressed and, I think, some apprehension and some misunderstanding about whether or not the province was going to say, well, only the First Nations would capture in the Swan River Valley. Contrary to some of the debate we heard earlier in the House today, I think this is an example of where, beyond any shadow of a doubt, the co-operation of the opposition should indicate that this is certainly a forward-looking process where we involved the assembly and the First Nations in helping them and working with them to be established in the elk ranching business.

There was some misgivings from residents in the valley about whether Natural Resources would override their best interests in allowing for trap sites. I do not think that happened. I believe in the end we ended up with—well, we did not end up with a lot of elk, we ended up with a reasonable understanding within the valley of the fact that trapping, while not everybody's most desirable occupation, can be carried out in a reasonable and cooperative manner with landowners, and that if we had had a colder winter with more snow, we would have been able to run a more successful trapping venture.

I would ask the member if she wants to rephrase something around that question, because I am not sure if I know where she is going.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The question I was asking the minister was late last fall you signed an agreement with First Nations to do the capture. Was it your intention—and I think you might have answered this—that First Nations would be doing all of the capture for the Department of Natural Resources this year, and after meeting with the people in the Swan River Valley and a different proposal put forward by the Elk Management Board, did you then change your mind and allow for the elk capture? What was your first intention?

**Mr. Cummings:** There was never intent that they would run all of the capture. There was a

misunderstanding in the Swan River Valley only that the First Nations might be the only ones who were going to trap in the valley. I know where that story started, but it was never my intention, nor was it ever part of the agreement that that would occur.

The success that I think I have had this year despite the fact that we did not catch many elk was that the First Nations began their capture, had actually greater success than our other contractors in the end; and secondly, the Elk Management Board agreed to work with us on something that in the main they considered distasteful and, in fact, took a role in attempting to capture some elk themselves. That was in my view a positive step forward, and I am anticipating being able to add quite a few more elk to the basic herd in this province next year.

I want it said clearly for the record that we have said—we have made it clear that in many statements that the government wishes to capture a certain number of elk and then the capture will be stopped in all forms. That number nominally was 700, I believe. Whether we are going to get there or not remains to be seen, but in the interests of everyone including the wildlife community, and the elk industry for that matter, there eventually has to be a known number of elk held in captivity, and then the industry will be purely volume driven and demand driven from there on.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The minister indicated that as a result of the weather the number of elk captured this year was not as large as he anticipated. It is my understanding that there was one individual who tried to help the government out to capture elk and, in fact, did capture some in a pen that was not inspected without approval. It is my understanding as well, it has been brought to my attention by people in the valley, that this individual then came to the Department of Natural Resources and said that he had these elk, and he would like to sell them to the government, which was an illegal activity. It is my understanding as well that this individual was not charged but was told to let the elk go.

Can the minister indicate what he knows about this incident and why, is it government policy when someone captures wildlife, or holds wildlife illegally, that they would be allowed to let them go, or is it

government policy that if someone is holding wildlife without a permit that they would be charged?

**Mr. Cummings:** There is no third-party confirmation of this capture. In other words there was a phone call made to the department, and the individual was told this better not be true, and when our officers get there, there better not be any elk there.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Can the minister indicate whether there were deputy ministers and legal staff involved in any way in ensuring that these elk did not stay in captivity and what the process was to ensure that they were disposed of before any of the natural resources staff was able to get there?

**Mr. Cummings:** The site was inspected by Natural Resource officers and there were no elk there when they arrived. By the way, there were obviously elk tracks in the area but there are numerous opportunities for them to have been around that site before and after this particular incident, so tracks in and of themselves did not cause us to lay charges, and there is no evidence of anything else that I have been informed of.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I believe the minister is well aware that there are a few individuals who have traps who have offered their services to the government to capture elk, and these pens continue to be open and feed continues to be available for animals to walk in and out of these pens. Is there not any step that the government can take to discourage this kind of activity? Is there not any action that the government can take to ensure that these animals are not being attracted into pens that they should not be?

I raise this with the minister because it is an issue that has been raised by several people in the community, people who are concerned about protecting wildlife, people who are concerned about how the capture is being operated and concern about what the intentions of these individuals are who have these pens, so I look to the minister to see what kind of advice he can give and whether there is any room for his staff to move on these kinds of instances.

**Mr. Cummings:** I have never seen an industry that is so fuelled by innuendo, fear and loathing as the elk industry, frankly, neighbour pitted against neighbour,

wildlife conservationist pitted against wildlife conservationist. It very often comes down to those who simply, under no circumstance, will tolerate what they consider a species of wildlife that should be kept in the wild and never be kept under any other circumstances to be expropriated or captured and allowed to go into any kind of an industry for any other use other than simply to be wild in our natural areas. So having said that, and I want that clearly on the record, there are vast differences of opinion about what should happen in the Swan River Valley particularly and in other parts of the province, about whether or not there should be a capture or whether or not there should be elk ranching. I support and can justify and I believe have a good working relationship with a vast number of people on both sides of this issue in terms of supporting a limited capture of elk to get the industry started.

\* (1600)

Manitobans and the Manitoba economy has been shortchanged for a number of years because other jurisdictions have had that legal elk ranching. We probably have seen poaching going on that we were—and this is more fear, loathing and innuendo, but the fact is there are myriad stories out there about elk being poached out of Manitoba and ending up in other jurisdictions where elk ranching was legal.

I believe by legalizing it and by imposing through the Department of Agriculture the type of standards for DNA testing and herd health, that Manitoba now has gone from zero to being a leader in the protection of the genetics of our elk that are being used for agricultural purposes. The DNA testing allows us to now charge anyone who has an elk on their property in captivity that their parentage or their origin cannot be traced, and the penalty for being caught with that type of unidentified or unsubstantiated elk will be the loss of their ability to ranch elk in this province. That is tens of thousands of dollars worth of value being confiscated from that operator through the loss of his permit to operate.

What has all this got to do with the debate in the Swan River Valley? Nowhere in the province are the feelings more strongly held than they are in the Swan River Valley. I know people quite well on both sides of the argument, maybe better than the member for Swan

River (Ms. Wowchuk) would like me to some days, but the fact is I have known these people since I was a teenager, some of them, and the fact that our legally authorized captures have been harassed is not a pretty story. The fact that the very corner of the valley—I believe it is called Pretty Valley—where we have said we would not take any more elk this year was the area where we took elk from previously. The member is talking about the former co-operators in terms of capture. We said we would not take any more elk out of that corner this year because there was, I believe, 70-odd head, or something like that, taken out of that corner a year ago, so we would not take them from that herd.

This is still a matter of debate, and I guess I am going to start the debate by what I am about to say on the record. I want to talk to the advisory committee about what their understanding is of valley elk, because the co-operating committee in the valley—and I am going to have to confirm this, but I believe they set up a trap not very far from Pretty Valley. I am interested to know how they can tell me where their trap was that it was not capturing some of the same elk that they said these other gentlemen should not have been capturing. That is a legitimate question and it is a legitimate discussion that we will have over the course of the summer. I am not pointing fingers, but I think if we are going to have this kind of a discussion, it has to be out on the table about do we want to capture elk, or are the elk so well trained in the Swan River Valley that they only stay in one five-section block and they do not go over to the next block? We all know that that is not the case, so that is a legitimate discussion.

I had committed, along with my colleague in Agriculture, that we would make a capture of a certain number and that we would stay out of the capture business after that. This year has set us back, but there needs to be a number of decisions made regarding the elk in the valley. The crop depredation was down this year because of other conditions, ergo our capture was down as well, but we will be back to capture next year. I hope I will still have the co-operation of everyone in the valley. In fact, I would expect, because we have initiated some pretty open discussion, that we will have better co-operation, and we will also be able to look at opening up seasons as well that one way or another that herd in the valley needs to be reduced.

*Mr. Ben Sveinson, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair*

When the member asked about whether or not elk are being attracted to feed and whether that leads to trapping possibilities, everybody up there wants to feed and lure elk—including people with some very well-meaning intentions, including Natural Resources—where they simply want to lure-feed the elk to keep them in a certain part of the valley as opposed to going where they might do crop damage. So we have a standard whereby we are telling those who have elk traps that the trapping mechanism must be off them if they are not a licensed trapper.

**An Honourable Member:** Must be what?

**Mr. Cummings:** Off, removed.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, if I heard the minister just say—he said that he is telling people who are not eligible for trapping, those traps are going to have to be removed. No? Can you clarify that, please?

**Mr. Cummings:** What I said is they should be inoperative. The trap mechanism, the gate should be deactivated.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to hear that the minister indicated that they might be considering other options to deal with the large herds in the Swan River Valley. It has been a recommendation that came from the Elk Management Board years ago, that we should increase the number of licences to allow for more hunting, and there has always been a real backlog of many people who are interested in hunting who are not able to be licensed because they have to go on the draw system. So I am pleased that the minister is thinking about that, but I was raising the issue about elk that were captured illegally. The Department of Natural Resources was notified of it. No action, as I understand, was taken, or the minister says no elk were there.

Is the minister prepared to do an investigation to see why it was that when the department was notified that there was elk in captivity, why they did not go out there and lay charges rather than advising the individual that he should be letting these elk go? I think that the department has a responsibility, and where did their

directive come from to say that this individual should be advised to dispose of those elk before anyone came around? Why is it that when there was someone who was obviously not following the directions that were put out by the Department of Natural Resources, that no pen to capture elk could be used without first inspecting it—will the minister look into this because this is one of those issues that lead to further serious problems in the Swan River Valley.

As the minister has indicated, this has not been a pleasant situation for the past few years. There are people on both sides of the issue, and the minister is well aware that in the first year of the capture we were very lucky that it was only a pen that was burned because it could have been a much more serious situation. Here we have an illegal activity—[interjection] and the minister says there were no charges laid then, that is true.

The minister asks if there were charges laid then. No, there were not charges laid then, and there should have been. Any illegal activity such as that, there should have been charges laid. There should have been an investigation as to what happened because as I understand it, that particular fire cost the department money. I believe the department paid \$30,000 to the individual who lost that pen, so it cost the department money. The department should be investigating.

What I am asking is: is there going to be any investigation of these and steps taken to ensure that there is not this kind of activity going on on an ongoing basis, activity that causes a lot of hard feelings in the area, activities that we would like to see smoothed out.

**Mr. Cummings:** The member cannot have it both ways. I did not hear her stand up in this House and ask for an investigation and charges to be laid when people were trying to burn out the co-operator who was helping us catch elk a year ago. Where was she then?

#### Point of Order

**Ms. Wowchuk:** On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** The honourable member for Swan River—[interjection] Order, please. The



honourable member for Swan River, on a point of order?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I will ask the minister another question. Since he sat down, I want—

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** You want to ask the minister another—order, please.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes. He sat down. I have a point of order, yes. On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** Order, please. The honourable minister, to finish his comment.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** On a point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** The honourable member for Swan River, on another point of order.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, on my first point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** On the first point of order?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes, which you did not recognize me for.

\* (1610)

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** Order, please. Let me make something clear. I recognized the member for Swan River on a point of order. She said she did not want a point of order; she wanted just to ask another question. I then recognized the minister to finish his comment.

Now, if the member for Swan River wants to be recognized on a point of order, I recognize her on a point of order.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister just said that I did not support him on a fire that took place last year. If the minister—which I am completely unaware of a fire that took place in the last year—

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** Order, please.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There was a fire two years ago. That is the question I raised with the minister.

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** The honourable Minister of Natural Resources, to finish his response.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Chairman, I do not want to turn what is a fairly amicable debate into something else, but I am not going to allow the member to make allegations about whether or not the department has deported itself appropriately when the last time there was a serious incident that occurred in the valley—and the member is right, it was probably two years ago. I did not hear her on her feet then, or any time since, demanding that those who caused a definite dangerous and illegal act to occur, not only that, they were chasing elk with their snowmobiles, and they were in danger of being charged with harassment, if we could have identified them—I did not see the member up asking questions then.

But now that she is at the other end of the valley, she wants to ask about whether or not one of the people who has a trap out there may have infringed on the edge of legality. Mr. Chairman, none of this is condoned. All of it should have been subject to charges. On the other hand, the member is well aware that right in the middle of her own constituency, and I am trying to do her and, I think, everybody a favour by trying to keep some calmness around this situation, and that calmness applies to the same people two years ago who drove snowmobiles through the herds that these co-operators were trying to capture at the very time that they were about to close the gate. So let us make it fair for the goose and the gander. Both sides have been on the verge of finding themselves in serious difficulty, and we as legislators can not be seen to be condoning that.

But the same as a number of other debates that have occurred in this House today, if we do not act reasonable, if we do not act sensible and if we just want

somebody's blood on the floor, then we are never going to get anywhere. I will stand up for the side of reasonableness and defend what the department has done, defend—

**An Honourable Member:** That is why you are attacking the member for Swan River.

**Mr. Cummings:** The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says I am attacking the member for Swan River. I do not remember using her name. He can jump up on a point of order if he wants, but I think the people in the Swan River Valley would be much happier to know that the member for Swan River and the member for Ste. Rose had a reasonable debate in this House about whether or not charges were or were not laid when certain incidents occurred.

I am saying that if I or the department wanted to find some grounds to lay charges, there are not only these two incidents, probably a few others out there that would have led to a lot of wasted time in court, a lot of hurt feelings, and in the end, in both cases, to the best of my knowledge no elk were injured. They were certainly frightened but no elk were injured, and there were no witnesses or no proof.

We are both discussing something in this House that is probably based more on innuendo and fiction than it is on fact. I suggest that unless we want to carry on the debate in this vein that is probably all that can be said about it.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I do agree that we are having a sensible discussion here, but I want to make a bit of a—show the minister where the difference lies in these two situations. I want to tell him that I did not condone the activities that were taking place two years ago. I thought it was a very dangerous situation where lives were put at risk, and I did not support the activity that took place when that particular pen was burned down.

The difference in the two situations is that when the pen was burned down, my understanding is that nobody was identified as to who was carrying on the activities. In the case that I raise with the minister today with respect to this year's activities, it is my understanding that the Department of Natural Resources did know

who the person was who had captured elk and was holding them illegally, but chose not to, and the department did not take any action.

What I was asking the minister was: is there any follow-up? Has any follow-up taken place, or is the minister's department just condoning?

I do not think the two incidents, the one of two years ago which the minister says I did not raise has any connection, because, in one, people are identified; in another one, they are not. I would just like to put that on the record and raise just one more issue with the minister in another area that had caused concern for the people who are concerned about this capture. That was the decision by the government to capture elk in the Lundar area.

When the program was first established, my understanding was that capture was going to take place in areas where elk were causing a serious depredation problem. The herd in the Lundar area is one that has been re-established by a capture, and it is an established herd. My understanding is that it has been elk that were captured and then moved into the Lundar area and the herd is supposed to be doing well. My understanding is that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has put in a fair amount of money to ensure that this herd survives and does well, and that this herd is not causing serious problems, not a depredation herd.

Why was the decision made then to capture elk in the Lundar area when they are not elk that are causing depredation problems?

**Mr. Cummings:** The Interlake herd is causing some depredation payments to be made, so it is not correct to say that they are not entirely without causing some depredation problems; and frankly, the lack of co-operation that we have had in the Swan River Valley at a time when we were going after significant numbers and had a chance to capture them has impeded our ability to make a capture. We would rather have caught 200 in the valley last year and the year before and not been in the Interlake area.

The Interlake herd, however, has reached, I would suggest, something close to optimum size. They are starting to move. As elk and deer seem to want to do,

they go where the food is good, and they are bound to interfere with agriculture on second-cut alfalfa, alfalfa bales and so on.

We also were at the west end of the Swan River Valley. We were around the Riding Mountain. I think we had—and I stand to be corrected on this number, but we had six or eight co-operators this year. If the weather had of co-operated, we would have done much better on the capture, but I know that if we had a chance to take 200 or 300 out of the Interlake, we would not have taken them. I did press, and I take full responsibility for saying to the department: does the Interlake herd, can it not withstand any withdrawals? We are now paying out some depredation. They said, well, yes, the chances are not as good because the opportunity for them to yard up or to come to bait is not as high. As it turns out, they did. So they were in a populated area, and that is the balance that we are trying to bring.

That is why in the east end of the Swan River Valley, when we had taken some a year ago, we decided we would not take any this year. Maybe we will have to go back there next year, because I am beginning to second-guess myself and ask the department: how do you tell which ones are mountain elk and which ones are valley elk? After a while, I think this is getting to be too fine a point, and I want to have that debate with the advisory board this summer.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Can the minister indicate whether there are any plans by his department to capture any other species of wildlife for domestication?

**Mr. Cummings:** No.

\* (1620)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Thank you for that answer.

I have one more area that I just want to talk about briefly, and that is between the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings). That is the use of Crown land.

It is my understanding that at the present time when there is an individual that has a lease and that individual is not going to be using that lease anymore,

that Natural Resources is trying to recapture those areas of Crown land back into Natural Resources jurisdiction, and they will not be used for agriculture purposes anymore.

Now that we have an increased interest in livestock because of grain prices, there are more and more people looking for Crown lands for agriculture purposes. Can the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) indicate whether there is a plan to remove more land that is now being used for agriculture purposes and have it taken back into Natural Resources area to go back into its natural state, and if that is so, does the minister not recognize the need for more land for pasture and for hay for livestock producers in the province?

**Mr. Cummings:** It would seem that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) just made a statement in support of the expansion of the use of Crown lands and maybe even the sale of existing agricultural Crown leases and the continuation of the existing policy to do that. Frankly, that is what we are doing, but there is no change in our policy in terms of long-term lessees being able to buy their agricultural Crown if they choose to, nor is there a change in policy about taking back Crown land and returning it to its natural state unless there should be specific areas that for very specific purposes should be set aside.

I know that we have done a number of swaps which might be what the member is referring to. I know there are a number of small areas. We just took back a little piece from PFRA. It is going to be added to WMA. Those sorts of things are going on all the time, but that is just piece-by-piece management of the works that come up. So I am not sure, unless the member believes that something is happening in a regional basis that I am not aware of. I have not made or seen any departmental policies that are anything different than the status quo.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The issue that has been raised with me by constituents is that there is land that is being leased for agriculture purposes. For example, farmers are not using that land now, but they are being advised that if this particular farmer drops it, it will not be able to be taken up by another farmer for agriculture purposes. It will not be land available for agriculture anymore.

I am raising that with the minister and looking for information as to whether that has always been the policy. My understanding is that when agriculture Crown land is in the hands of one individual, they have the opportunity to buy that land, but if they are not going to buy it, it passes on to another individual who can then either lease it or purchase it.

The understanding that I have been given is that this is not the policy now. If the land is no longer used by one individual, it is then reverted back to Natural Resources, and it is not available for agriculture use. If this is the case, I would wonder why that has happened. If the minister is saying there is no change in policy, then I will have to go back to the individual and try to work through this and bring the matter to his attention.

**Mr. Cummings:** Perhaps the member would tell me where this land is, because unless there is, in fact, a specific or unique feature about this land, then there is some kind of a slip between the normal policy of the department and what is being conveyed to this person. I am also a little suspicious from time to time when these things come up that it is mischievous. I am not suggesting mischievous on the part of the member or mischievous on the part of myself, for that matter, in my response, but that somebody out there might be trying to justify something other than normal policy.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Mr. Chairman, I have some questions for the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae). I want to ask the Minister of Environment—

**An Honourable Member:** He is Natural Resources.

**Mr. Ashton:** Oh, resources, yes. Perhaps we can ask some to the Minister of Natural Resources when the Minister of Environment—I think he was here a minute ago—comes back.

I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. I wonder if he could indicate the statistics on the number of people that purchased seasonal camping sites. I have been made aware by the former owner of the Paint Lake Marina, certainly the huge drop that took place in the number of people using seasonal camping sites, that site that led to him having to sell the facility.

I would like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources if he could now provide that information and, if not, if he could provide it to us at a later date. There is a lot of concern that that impact was not taken into account, the impact on businesses and others that rely on people that come to our parks and use the seasonal camping sites. As the minister knows, there was a huge drop in the number of people using those sites. I am wondering if the minister can give us any information on that.

**Mr. Cummings:** Yes, I will be glad to provide that information. I assume you are talking about the campsite outside of Thompson, south of Thompson at Paint Lake? It is interesting, and I would, just for the record, while the Minister of Environment, before he gets here, the Paint Lake area was unique in the reaction to the changes to the charges in that area, but it strikes me as being a difficult situation when there was apparently a lot of public demand for improved services, sewer, electricity, washrooms, all those sorts of things, and there were some improvements made in that area, but when the price went up no one wanted to recognize the increased cost that went with providing these services.

But I would make this analogy, and I do not need to tell the member for Thompson too much about human nature, but I had a similar experience with electrified plug-ins for an institution for which I was a member of the board, and everyone said that they wanted a plug-in and that they would pay. That is what the survey said. They were willing to pay for the opportunity to plug in their cars. I am trying to draw an analogy, because I cannot give exact figures on Paint Lake, but when the time came, the sign-up was almost zero. People would park on the other side of the building rather than pay for the plug-in for their cars, so I guess I am experiencing in the Paint Lake area pretty much of the same result.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, now that the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae) is here, I will ask some questions. I would just state that I had asked for the impact of the increase. I point out that there were really no significant improvements to the seasonal camping sites that we are talking about. There is pressure for improvements but it is primarily other users, particularly permanent residents, and I will be corresponding with the minister.

They are concerned about the need for a fire protection system, a volunteer firefighter situation right now that they do have. They need some equipment, so I hope the minister will not confuse the two, and I just perhaps suggest that if you could take it as notice. We are running out of time here, so I am not expecting an answer now, but I would like some indication of what happened with those sites, because I know certainly numerous people that did not renew and it had an impact.

\* (1630)

To the Minister of Environment, if I could ask the Minister of Environment very briefly here, because we will be moving this through fairly soon—in fact, we may wish to get the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in fairly soon, within the next 10 minutes or so. I want to ask some questions about Tolko. As the minister knows, there has been a change of ownership with Repap, as the significant change in the direction that has been announced in terms of the amount of cut that Tolko is going to be using. It has increased by at least 60 percent, perhaps may have even doubled. It depends on the statistics you look at. I am basing this on information provided by Tolko. So you have a shift in the kind of cutting that is going to take place, the kind of market they are aiming at.

Concerns have been expressed about this in many of the areas affected. There was a meeting for example in Wabowden recently that brought together people in the forestry industry, tourism industry, fishing, trapping. A lot of people raised questions about the impact in that area, which ranged from the bringing in of outside contractors from Alberta, which is obviously an employment issue, but also the question of the sustainability of the cut and the impact on other uses.

I have had concerns expressed to me by individuals. If I had more time, I would ask this of Natural Resources. There is a trapper in the Thicket Portage area. Natural Resources gave a permit to some of the Tolko employees to go in and shoot the beaver that have several beaver houses in that area. He went in and tried to trap, and he found there were only three beavers in his traps. He found out that Natural Resources had apparently given this permit to shoot all the beavers because of the impact they have on the water flows and

the impact that it has on logging. So I will be raising some of the more detailed issues.

What I really want to know is what position the government has on Tolko, what position they have now on the request that there be a federal environmental review, and what position the Minister of Environment has on the very question of sustainability, because if it is not there will not be trees there to cut for the next 75 years. I think more than half the province is basically within the cut area that goes back to CFI in the '60s, Manfor, Repap, and now Tolko. But there are some real questions asked about what real impact it is going to have on drainage, on other species, on other resource uses. It has been accelerated by this huge cut, that increase that we are seeing. My concern obviously is that these are serious questions that need to be dealt with.

I know the CEC licence has been appealed by a number of groups, including the MKO. I think the Future Forest Alliance is a group that has also been involved with fighting it. I really want to know what the government's position is, whether the minister has met with Tolko, whether he has met with others who are concerned about the environmental impact.

I want to stress again that what people are looking for in the northern communities now is a balance. I think people know obviously the forestry industry has been around for many years, but we want to make sure that we do not lose other resource uses, and we want to make sure that it indeed is sustainable in a true environmental sense. I appreciate any information the minister could give us on his government's position on Tolko's increased cut.

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Mr. Chairman, I know that we are in committee, so I will just serve notice that when the Mace assumes its normal position, I will, if necessary, ask that there be agreement that we waive private members' hour today, depending on what time that happens to be.

In answer to the matters raised by the honourable member, he is right that the issues he raises are serious questions that serious people have about our environment and about the situation respecting Tolko and its cut.

The CEC decision and licence conditions are under appeal in various ways. Now, a number of people have sent correspondence raising the same kinds of issues raised today by the honourable member, and he seems to be well in tune with what those concerns are. They are being raised with my office, which is the appropriate place. These concerns, we are responding to those people writing in and telling them that we are considering their letters and their concerns as part of the appeal process of the licence.

As the honourable member may know, when the CEC makes a decision, and an interim licence or any other matter proceeds from that, there is an appeal mechanism and that mechanism is being used now. So it is with that in mind that I am not going to answer all the honourable member's questions because they are the subject of appeals that have been filed by various people, and we are going to examine the questions very seriously.

I will, however, ask my staff to review what the honourable member has said today, and we will prepare, to the extent that we can until the appeals are finalized, some kind of answer that would give the honourable member as much information as we are able to give him at this point. The appeal will ultimately be determinative.

The honourable member did, however, refer to a federal review, and I am not sure whether that is possible with the Tolko matter or not. That is something we can find out, but earlier this year, I attended in St. John's, Newfoundland, a meeting of federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Environment. I would say an historic partnership on harmonization of environmental regulation began that day with the signing of a multilateral agreement. It contains an umbrella agreement, plus three sub-agreements, dealing with things like assessment and standards. In the next three years, there will be a number of other sub-agreements which will regularize the review process, the assessment process, and all the ministers there are satisfied, will improve the environment for environmental regulation in the future. But surely there will be further opportunities for us to discuss these matters at future occasions as well.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Chairperson, since the minister, I think, is essentially taking this matter under advisement,

I would just like to make a few more comments, and given the time on the clock, I certainly do not expect the minister to respond now.

I just want to indicate the significance of the concern. I have attended a number of meetings. I attended a meeting of the forestry advisory board of Tolko. It included Natural Resource officials and people from northern communities. There was a meeting in Wabowden, which I did not have the opportunity to attend, but I talked to people both prior to the meeting and since the meeting. This is where much of the concern, I think, was expressed, in this rather unique combination of people involved in the forestry industry, people involved in various other uses. In fact, people said at the meeting they wanted a balance. They are concerned. The quote particularly that came out of the meeting in this minutes indicated the degree of the concerns.

There is a concern that the area around Wabowden will become a vast clear-cut area. That is what the people of Wabowden are saying. They are concerned that, in fact, whereas the life of the resource in that area was probably going to be in the neighbourhood of 20 years, it could be as little as six years. That, I think, is important. We are talking about sustainability, I think, not just in the sense that there will be trees for 75 years to cut. We all understand that is the case. It is a huge area of forest, but, you know, this is a forest that has been passed down to us. It is a resource that has been passed down to us from hundreds of years, thousands of years of natural history. There is a real concern about the impact that the increased cut will have on other resource uses and on the natural environment itself. This is where, I think, there has to be recognition of the dramatic shift that is taking place in the kind of cutting and the volume of cutting.

Obviously, the first questions that will come up will be environmental concerns. That is why I am raising it on behalf of, certainly, the people of Wabowden, a community that I represent. I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) has received similar concerns in his constituency. I know many Manitobans generally have raised these kinds of concerns, and I think that it is incumbent on the government and the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae). The Minister of

Environment, I think, has to be looking at those environmental questions, along with the resource-use questions, obviously which have been dealt with.

I would indicate that if the minister wishes to see further detail on some of the concerns, I did raise this in the Community Economic Development Committee related to the CEDF, because CEDF is the loans agency that has provided funding for many of the individual contractors who are very concerned, particularly about the use of Alberta contractors. I have talked to Tolko officials, and they have indicated it is their intent that this be a one-time situation. I think one time was too many.

But if that is the indication, I would indicate on the record, I have received that assurance from Tolko, and I appreciate that because employment is certainly one of the aspects that we have to look at, but I can tell you it is a going concern. It is a growing concern with other resource uses and it is a concern to people in the forestry industry, the loggers, many people who obviously have just as much interest in sustainability of the resource and protection of the environment in our home communities as does anyone. I will, in fact, correspond with the minister in further detail on some of these specific issues. I may even raise this during the Estimates of the Department of the Environment, and given the shortage of time, we are certainly prepared to pass the rest of the Interim Supply.

\* (1640)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question?

RESOLVED that the sum not exceeding \$1,845,435,095, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in the Main Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Shall the resolution pass?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The resolution is accordingly passed. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a resolution respecting Interim Supply, 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.**

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of ways and means for raising of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

**Motion agreed to.**

## COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS

### Interim Supply

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** The Committee of Ways and Means will come to order, please. We have before us for our consideration the resolution respecting the Interim Supply Bill. The resolution reads as follows:

RESOLVED that towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenditures of the Public Service, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999, the sum of \$1,845,435,095, being 35 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in the Main Estimates of the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) have any comments? No.

Is the committee ready for the question? Shall the resolution be passed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The resolution is accordingly passed. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

##### Committee Report

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means has adopted a resolution respecting Interim Supply, 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.**

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), that leave be given to introduce a Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), and that the same be now received and read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole, by leave.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr. Stefanson:** I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), that Madam Speaker do

now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill 23 for Third Reading.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

##### Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** The Committee of the Whole will come to order please to consider Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998. Does the minister have an opening statement?

**An Honourable Member:** Pass.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall we consider the bill clause by clause?

**An Honourable Member:** Pass.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall Clauses 1 through 6—pass; preamble—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

##### Committee Report

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), and has directed me to report the same without amendments.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### REPORT STAGE

##### Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural



Development, that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in, by leave.

**Motion agreed to.**

### House Business

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Before proceeding further, and in case it is necessary, I would ask that the House agree that we not have private members' hour today.

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to waive private members hour? [agreed]

\* (1650)

### THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, with the leave of the House, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), be now read a third time and passed.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Point of Order

**Mr. McCrae:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I am wondering, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), at step seven of the procedure when he moved first reading of the interim supply bill, if leave was granted for that, just to check the record—[interjection] You are telling me it was?

**An Honourable Member:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** I am sure leave was granted.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for that clarification.

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Roy MacGillivray):** His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

*His Honour W. Yvon Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:*

**Madam Speaker:** May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government and beg of Your Honour the acceptance of this bill, Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 1998; Loi de 1998 portant affectation anticipée de crédits.

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this bill in Her Majesty's name.

*His Honour was then pleased to retire.*

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 6.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 26, 1998

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