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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

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Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 31, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS**ORDERS OF THE DAY****PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 200—The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House for second reading of public Bill 200?

An Honourable Member: Stand it.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS**Res. 4—Winnipeg Inner City Housing**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I move, seconded by the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), that

WHEREAS problems of poor housing and homelessness, particularly in Winnipeg's inner city, have grown over the past decade into a significant issue for our province; and

WHEREAS community renewal, a top priority in Manitoba, requires that decent and affordable housing be available to all Manitobans; and

WHEREAS community groups determined to improve the housing in their neighbourhoods have used valuable time and resources approaching each level of government for funding, a process that can be both time-consuming and lengthy; and

WHEREAS single-window access streamlines the fundraising activities of community groups by providing access to all levels of government funding through a single office; and

WHEREAS the current government pledged itself to the development of a new Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative which would provide community groups with single-window access to available funds for housing projects; and

WHEREAS the current government has kept its promise and over \$850,000 in combined funding from three levels of government has already flowed into the initiative as of November 2000 and is available from the recently established Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative single-window office;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the provincial government for its efforts in improving housing in Manitoba, particularly through the development of single-window access to government funding; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly commend the provincial government for its support of community-based renewal projects that allow grass-roots organizations to decide what is best for their community and to access the necessary funding to make their vision a reality.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this resolution today because it shows that our Government is taking action in an area that badly needed action. As some of us who have been following housing issues for a long time will remember, in 1993 the federal Conservative government cancelled all funding for social housing across Canada, and I remember that.

I remember at the time that the federal official opposition party, the Liberal Party, the party of my seatmate here, screamed and yelled that this was the wrong thing to do, and they denounced the federal Conservative government

of the time. Remember that government, the Mulroney government? They said if they were the government they would restore money for housing. Well, what happened? Within a year they became the next federal government, and some of them had been very involved in the housing issue.

For example, they had a task force of opposition members who toured the country. They came to Winnipeg. They came to the University of Winnipeg and held a public hearing. The chair of that task force was none other than Paul Martin. They issued a report, and they said they would spend tons of money on social housing in Canada if they were elected the government, and what happened when they became the government? They did not add a cent of social housing.

What did the provincial government do in 1993, this Official Opposition party? They wiped out all money for social housing as well. So for six years there was almost nothing spent other than the RRAP program in social housing. The result of that was that there was a continuation of decline in the quality of housing in the inner city. There were increased waiting lists for people waiting for affordable social housing and all kinds of problems that go along with the lack of decent, affordable housing. For example, in my constituency—well, I could tell stories forever about some of the social housing problems, but I think I had best go on with the resolution.

The point is that our Government recognized the seriousness of the problem, and to the credit of the federal government and the City of Winnipeg they joined with the Province of Manitoba. So we have a tripartite program, three levels of government, and to their credit all three partners are contributing a total of \$22 million for social housing over the next five years. We are hoping to improve the quality of housing, particularly in inner city neighbourhoods. We are committed to working with our partners to make a difference, particularly by giving resources to community groups, so that they can make the decisions so they have some control. They can decide what the priorities and needs are in their neighbourhoods, and they can decide what the best way to deliver that housing is.

So now we have the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, a three-year tripartite partnership which has been established to address the declining housing stock, homelessness, and to revitalize older neighbourhoods. One of the best parts of this initiative is the way that it has been organized and that is through a single-window access office, so that groups do not have to go to three levels of government and decide where they fit or apply three times and get turned down twice. They can go to one office and apply at one place for funding from the three levels of government. Not only are we providing money just for housing, but we are providing money for other social needs to rebuild neighbourhoods, as well.

As of March 2001, Mr. Speaker, \$2.84 million in combined funding from the three levels of government has been committed, and some of the projects that already have been approved are, for example, \$2.6 million in combined funding to projects in West Broadway and William Whyte. William Whyte neighbourhood is in the north end.

In December 2000, Mr. Speaker, the Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Development Corporation and North End Community Renewal Corporation received \$30,000 each to develop neighbourhood housing plans in Spence, West Broadway and William Whyte. These organizations have been co-operating with each other, not competing with each other, which was good to see.

Funding commitments from both the Neighbourhood Housing Assistance Program and rental rehabilitation assistance programs will improve neighbourhoods in Point Douglas. The single-window access allows applicants to access a variety of funding programs, so it is not just the Housing and Homelessness Initiative. They can access the Neighbourhood Housing Assistance Program, which provides assistance to non-profit or co-operative organizations for locally planned and developed housing initiatives.

I am hoping that some of the programs that were very successful in the past, when the NDP was in office in the 1980s, and some of these programs continued until 1993, for example,

there was a co-op housing program to renovate existing but vacant buildings. I was very involved with one of those where we converted St. John's United Church, which had been vacant for two or three years, into twenty suites of co-op housing. It is beautifully maintained. I drove by the other day, and they have flowers along the north side of their building and garden plots at the back. It has been not only a good co-op but a good thing for the neighbourhood, and instead of having a vacant building it is being occupied. We need a lot more of those kinds of initiatives in the north end and the rest of the inner city.

Also, qualifying community organizations and individuals may receive up to \$10,000 per housing unit for home ownership and renovations. This program is targeted to five neighbourhoods—Spence, West Broadway, north and south Point Douglas, William Whyte, and Lord Selkirk. Now, one of my colleagues asked what the uptake is, and I do not know the answer to that, but I will certainly look into it. Of course, your critic could ask that question in Estimates next year. I think we need some time for the program to get up and running.

I am sure that if there is money there, people are going to use it, unlike one of the Conservative programs that was targeted to the suburbs. Of course, everybody was eligible—they always reminded us of that—but you had to have a certain investment in order to get money. I think you had to spend \$5,000 to get \$1,000 back. Well, in Burrows constituency, very few people applied because people could not afford it, so I think it is important to target the money to where the greatest need is. I certainly do not have a problem with that.

The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program is funded through cost sharing between the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba for a total of almost \$6 million in 2000-2001. The Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, contributes 75 percent of the funding for a total of \$5,115,000; the Government of Manitoba contributes 25 percent of the funding for a total of \$1,705,000. It is my understanding that the Province of Manitoba is now delivering this program, which, I think, is an improvement. It provides assistance to low-income home-

owners and owners of low-income rental homes to meet health and safety standards and to persons with disabilities for accessibility improvements to enhance independent living.

Funding for the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative is provided by Neighbourhoods Alive!, which, I should point out, also exists in parts of rural Manitoba, namely, in Thompson and Brandon. Mr. Speaker, Neighbourhoods Alive! is a comprehensive initiative that provides community groups with support for housing improvements, employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. I am sure someday the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) would be happy to tell us about all the ways that Neighbourhoods Alive! is spending money in Brandon.

Our Government is providing about \$2 million in 2001 through the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative for community-driven revitalization, in addition to the \$8 million over four years provided for the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative.

Another key component of Neighbourhoods Alive! is the \$2-million Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, which provides financial support to community organizations for local planning enhancement projects, economic development and community support programs. Through Neighbourhoods Alive! funding has been committed to a variety of projects, for example, \$20,000 to the Tenant Landlord Cupertino Program. This program in the West Broadway neighbourhood will encourage landlords to work with tenants on the ongoing maintenance and repair of residential buildings, access and post signs on buildings which are safe and affordable places to rent in the area, develop and maintain a housing registry indicating which buildings have orders to repair or health orders against them, develop a caretaker training workshop for caretakers of rental buildings in the neighbourhood.

* (10:10)

I think this is a very good initiative because when people have access to a housing registry

and when they have assistance finding a rental place, they can continue to live in the same neighbourhood. That is very important because we know that if students change schools more than twice in one year, they tend to have a very, very high rate of failure, so there is a social cost to that. In fact, there is a cost to government because in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 they actually have a program that follows children from school to school so that they can take their work from school to school. They do not have to be retested. A lot of this is necessitated by the poor quality of housing. That is why people move during the school year, even though The Residential Tenancies Act says they do not have to move till the end of June. It is important that we stabilize families and stabilize neighbourhoods and take some of the costs off the public sector.

Another Neighbourhoods Alive! funding commitment is \$30,000 to the West Broadway Neighbourhood Housing Plan. It will provide for the completion of a comprehensive housing strategy in the West Broadway neighbourhood and the co-ordination of project implementation. Actually, Mr. Speaker, some exciting things are already happening in West Broadway. There are a number of organizations that are working there and making a difference in their neighbourhood.

Another grant is up to \$21,400 to the Wolseley Family Place for a 12-month period. This will provide for the delivery of pre-employment activities and hands-on employment experiences within Wolseley Family Place for families who participate at the centre.

A similar thing is happening in the north end, where Just Housing is getting money to train people to do housing renovation. We hope that the graduates of that program will be hired by some of the non-profit organizations that are actually renovating housing in their neighbourhood so that people who need jobs are trained and continue to be employed and to live in the neighbourhood.

Another grant is up to \$42,600 to the Community Housing Plan, which will be provided to implement the preparation, implementation, and co-ordination of a community housing plan. I think this is a major change from

the way housing programs were delivered in the past. We listened to what the community was saying in this area. They said: We do not want Manitoba Housing deciding what their priorities are and being the delivery agent and doing everything. They said: We want to identify what the needs are in our community, and we want to be the delivery agents. Our Government listened to those concerns, and we have responded by saying, yes, we are going to give you money so that you can come up with a housing plan and so that you can deliver that plan in your community.

This plan, the Community Housing Plan, will emphasize the neighbourhoods of William Whyte, Lord Selkirk and North Point Douglas, which means that we are starting in the areas of highest need. It does not make sense to spread the money out over the whole province, which people in Opposition are heckling me and telling me we should be doing. I think there is a big rationale for targeting the money in the highest need neighbourhoods, and if they have any doubt about that I would be happy to take them on a walking tour with me and show them the boarded up houses and the houses that have been abandoned by landlords and placarded "insanitary," leading to all kinds of other problems like depopulation in the inner city, which results in changed electoral boundaries, a loss of population, a flight to the suburbs and people feeling unsafe, just a host of problems, arson being one, of course. This affects my neighbourhood. This affects the area I represent in the north end and many neighbourhoods, not just William Whyte, Lord Selkirk and North Point Douglas.

The plan will work in conjunction with the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative to develop sustainable housing strategies. The Spence Revitalization Strategy has been given \$2,700 to provide the Spence neighbourhood organization money to implement their project. The 2001 Budget continues funding support for the Neighbourhoods Alive! strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be the sponsor of this resolution and delighted that it actually got debated. We know the Opposition has been cancelling private members' hour, but we are happy that today, especially under the

new rules, we got to have private members' hour. I am looking forward to hearing my colleague on the Government side speak and a member of the Opposition, who will probably talk it out, but I am looking forward to their remarks. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Just to start off my conversation, Mr. Speaker, I should mention that the cancellation of private members' hour is always a unanimous decision. It is not only the Government but the Opposition. The member is saying it is our fault it has been cancelled.

An Honourable Member: The Government House Leader always brings it forward.

Mr. Reimer: That is right. They have a Government House Leader. He used to be the assistant Government House Leader, I believe, or deputy.

Mr. Speaker, just in reply to the private member's resolution, he does cover a fair amount of points in regard to the housing and the homelessness within the province. He is referring particularly to Winnipeg's inner city and, as is always the case, it seems there is a very high concentration of concern for particular areas in the city, but there was no mention in his presentation about the rural area or some of the problems that are faced by some of the rural towns and cities in regard to the homelessness and the poor housing in their areas. So I would think that the resolution itself should be a little broader in scope, instead of just for the City of Winnipeg and three particular ridings that he alluded to, which happened to be the Government's ridings, if you want to call it.

Mr. Speaker, I did have the honour and the privilege of serving as Housing Minister in the previous government. I had an opportunity to have a fair amount of exposure to what the member called social housing or public housing in our sector. I have to say that, firstly, the staff, people who are involved with public housing, have a dedication that I was very, very impressed with in their attitude to try to help the people within the public housing sector, the movement toward sustainability and the fact of people using public housing as a transition period to move through to other portions of their life goals and their expectations. So I must say, as Housing Minister, I enjoyed the term and the

benefits that were attributed to myself in my exposure with the people who were involved, not only within management or in the Department of Housing but also within the residents associations that I had a chance to meet with and the people at public housing complexes that I happened to go to.

I noticed in the member's resolution that he does refer to in his last RESOLVED that the Assembly support community-based renewal projects and allow grass-roots organizations to decide what is best for their community and to access the necessary funding, a very important part of his resolution, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that it is very, very important that the local associations and the local tenants associations do take more control and more guidance in what they believe is best for their complex.

Under my tenure, we initiated tenant-managed public housing complexes that turned out to be very, very successful, not in completion, but on the road towards completion in two very large housing complexes, the Gilbert Park housing complex and the Lord Selkirk housing complex. We were very optimistic with their growth, with the direction that they were taking, and the self-management, the fact that there was self-gratification by the tenants association. They started to expand their scope of administrative capabilities and their maintenance performances within their complex. There was a growing optimism in their tenants association that they were on the road to self-sustainability within their complex.

Unfortunately, and I must say unfortunately, this Government that is now there decided that they know best and they stifled this type of growth by changing the boards and by not encouraging what should be happening. Unfortunately, the tenants association movement for self-sustainability is stalled. In fact in the one complex where there was a large degree of optimism, the Gilbert Park association, the whole association has more or less been decimated because of the government interference in how the board should be run and their meetings, having staff there totally on site at all their meetings. The board itself has not been able to make any decisions.

* (10:20)

In fact they even cut back their funding. The funding that was allocated for their self-management was something that was used to help them get on the track to doing their own decisions, but this Government, this NDP Doer government decided that they know best, so they pulled back the funding. In essence, the tenants association dissolved itself and did not have the ability to carry on.

It is odd that they would do that when they stand in this House and talk about grass-roots organizations and grass-roots involvement, but it would appear that the theme has to be grass-roots involvement as long as it is government involvement, and that is part of this scenario. It is unfortunate that they feel that way, because I believe it stifles the initiative and the growth of self-sustainability and community pride within the complexes, because there was a tremendous amount of optimism when I was involved and we were going down that path and it was a directive of our department that this was to be initiated. That directive now would appear to be changed. Housing, as I said, has pulled the funding on this particular complex, and the group they have got now is not in any position to further expand their capabilities.

The member is talking about their commitment to over \$850,000 in combined funding from the three levels of government. I have got to say that that amount there, when you look back on our record of what we had accomplished with housing and public housing, I remember in 1999 just before we left office we authorized \$10 million of modernization for public housing. That was part of one of our last directives. In fact, we modernized about 113 units with that \$10 million in Garden City, St. James, Brandon, St. Vital, Churchill and some in Winnipeg.

So we spread it around in regard to the allocation of funding of \$10 million. This Government here is now touting their \$850,000. They are earmarking it for three NDP-held ridings in the city. Mr. Speaker, they feel that that is a great commitment to social housing and the homelessness in this city. I have also got to point out the fact that when we were in

government we allocated extra funding for what they called the HASI Program, which is the Home Adaptation for Senior's Independence Program. These were forgivable loans to seniors to upgrade their homes, something that, I do not know, I did not see it in the program for the Budget. It may be there. Maybe I am remiss in not finding it, but those are some of the things.

I have to point out too the fact that under the Winnipeg Development Agreement there was an allocation of a million dollars towards housing assistance for high-risk groups that also flowed through our government. These were all in the last few years before we left government. This Government here is standing up and touting an amount that they have allocated of \$850,000. They feel that this was a great, great accomplishment on their part. I have to point out that under the RRAP program, they are talking about what they put in. Our total contribution was \$1.8 million the last time we were in government during the last year.

So all these things, they gloat around a small amount of money and think that they are going to solve all the problems in three ridings that they have selected for the funding and then they roll this out as the panacea for housing and homelessness.

The initiative and the overall concept, there should be programs, there should be community involvement, there should be community feedback, but under this present government they feel very, very strongly that if there is going to be funding going out they have to be on top of the purse strings and part of the decision making. So it becomes a selective process of where the funding is going, how it is being spent and what type of administrative feedback they get, as long as it fits their agenda.

Mr. Speaker, they do talk a lot about spending on this resolution of \$850,000, but in essence what it does is it pales in comparison to what we had spent when we were in government in regard to the homelessness.

An interesting scenario, Mr. Speaker, is also the fact that when this Government, the NDP Doer government came into power, one of the first things they did is, they cancelled the new

home ownership grant program that we put in to encourage young people to get into the market, buying homes, a very proven success, and they cut that. They cut that. There was the incentive for people to buy and to build homes, whether it was in the inner city, in the community or wherever it was. This Government cut it. You could see the dramatic change in housing starts. It was even noticed in the *Real Estate News* that they went down. In fact, if the member would look in their Budget, it is even mentioned in their Budget that the housing starts went down. Unfortunately, I did not bring the Budget book with me, because it is hard to read all those things that are hidden in the back. But they cancelled the new homeowners grant program. Now they are saying, well, we should have more new homes in the city.

I do not know, you cannot have it both ways. We introduced a program, we had very strong success with it. We had great buy-in by the young couples that were starting off for the first time and buying homes. This Government comes into power, they cut it, because the Finance Minister feels that he needs this money for the pet projects in their ridings. There is where it is.

It was the previous government under the Conservatives that brought in legislation in regard to the inner city housing and the boarding up of housing for the city to tear down these houses and to utilize the space to help for some of these rebuilds. It was our government that worked setting up programs with Westminster Housing, some of the co-ops that were there. We encouraged it; we expanded it. We wanted the programs to work so that this was something that the people in Winnipeg could look for.

I also have to point out the fact that we looked at other parts. The programs that we initiated were for all of Manitobans, because there was a government that was elected to serve all Manitobans, not the three or four ridings in the city of Winnipeg.

This Government here has a very myopic view of where they want to spend money. They spend it in the areas that they feel they hold or held, and this is where this program is geared towards. It is not a Manitoba program. It is an

individual riding program. Unfortunately, that is not the way that they are there for all Manitobans.

I know that some of the members across the way are nodding their heads in agreement. I feel that shows that they understand that these things are now—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(10:30)

Point of Order

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I would just like the record to be clarified that no one on this side of the House would agree with the member's comments. In fact, we did not see any agreement on this side in terms of his comments. Let the record show that there was no agreement to his position.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on the same point of order.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I sat here and watched heads bob back and forth. I am not sure if it was in agreement or if they were nodding off from a late night.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines, it is not a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Reimer: As you mentioned, it is a dispute over the facts, and the facts speak for themselves. I guess my time is over. I appreciate very much the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record.

Mr. Tweed: It is also a pleasure for me to stand and put a few comments on the record in regard to the resolution that has been brought forward by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). Not to try and steal anybody's thunder, but it certainly seems that the Member for Burrows has perhaps been spending a lot of time with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). I sat through

the Estimates process with the minister, and he spent the good majority of that time patting himself on the back and telling us what wonderful things that the Government had done for the province of Manitoba, particularly in the health area. I know that the Minister of Health has a legislative assistant who is not the Member for Burrows, but obviously it has rubbed off on him.

In his resolution, you know, he is talking about commending the Government for doing this. Really we are debating a resolution that actually has no action to it at all. There certainly are some comments and points put forward by the Member for Burrows, but in reality there is not one form of action that is being discussed here other than commend. I am sure if he cannot get his question in Question Period to ask, perhaps he could meet with them in caucus and commend them himself, and we would not be spending a lot of our time discussing a very important issue. I do not want to downplay the fact that it is an important issue, but the fact that we are not asking or not suggesting that the Government respond in any particular way or any way of getting a job done that perhaps we are spending a lot of time going around in circles.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I will speak directly to the bill and some of the comments that were made. I think everyone in the province of Manitoba, probably across Canada and North America—I was listening to the mayor of Calgary talk about the problems that they are experiencing right now. It is an issue that affects us all and it is an issue that we all have a responsibility to deal with. I think it has always been the philosophy of our government when we were government, the fact that people who are capable of helping themselves should do it for themselves. We want to build strong, independent families, independent people, and people that will take the challenges put in front of them on a day-to-day basis and deal with them and try and move forward, but we do have a group or some people in our society that at this point do not have all those capabilities or all of the access to the tools that they need to provide in this case decent housing for themselves and their families.

I think it is incumbent that governments have to listen and have to be prepared to assist, but in that statement alone I do want to clarify, governments are there to listen to the people and to respond. Governments do not get out in front, and we have seen it far too often in this particular government where they constantly say do not worry, we are the Government, we know what is best for you. Do not worry. I think that is a very, very backward step for any government to take in today's world. People in this century are looking forward and looking ahead to the future and the positive things that they can get out of it. Unfortunately, right now in Canada, we have one government in particular that is going back to the old days where governments were looked upon to be all, do all. I do not think that is a good direction for this province, and I do not think it is a good direction for this Government to go.

We are going to set back the clock of time several years. In a very short period of time, the people will have a choice again to make that decision, whether they want to move forward or move backward. We are certainly convinced that they will see the right direction and move this province ahead to compete with the other provinces in Canada and the states across the U.S., and indeed all of North America. Being a leader and taking the initiative is where Manitobans want to be and where they should be. We certainly do not believe that this type of thinking is advancing that case at all.

Renewal. How do we get better homes, better housing and better accommodations provided for people in our communities where it is most needed? Again, I think you have to go out and listen to them. It has to be brought into a bigger plan so that we can all see the benefits of it, and everybody can move forward on the same page.

I am disappointed. I have to say that it seems to be a common practice of this Government that the money is staying just within the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg and, in a lot of cases, within a very restricted boundary inside the city of Winnipeg. I think for a government to suggest that there is not need elsewhere in the province is a mistake. I think that it is a mistake in the sense that they are not going out and listening and hearing what people are saying and trying to accommodate the population of the province, the

people of Manitoba, not just say the people of a specific area in downtown Winnipeg.

We have seen that in all the things this Government has done since coming to office. We have seen the complete annihilation of the Rural Development Department, which has been sitting inactive for the last several months waiting for things to happen. I think something like this just confirms to rural Manitobans what is happening and what the ideals of this Government are, that is, let us draw every ounce of blood we can out of rural Manitoba while we can and let us put it into a few inner core ridings in the city of Winnipeg and sell it to the people that we are doing the best thing for all Manitobans, when, in fact, they are doing it for a select group of people in a small, confined area inside the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg. Whether we want to face the realities of it, I would suggest particularly doing it for political reasons, as opposed to for some of the right things that they so righteously stand on and announce to people that they are looking after everyone in Manitoba.

The idea of a single-window access, that is a great idea. That is not something that happened overnight. It is something that I know the previous Minister of Housing was working toward. I know in other departments that was just listening to people. People said that they did not want to have to come to an office and be shuffled from one door to another door to another door. I think governments of all stripes are finally learning that. I think that is a positive thing.

We have had great success with the Canada-Manitoba jobs program. We have had good success when the two jurisdictions worked together. I think we need to extend that even further and include the City. We need to include the local management organizations of these communities, and bring them all in, sit down and say what do you need, how do you need it, and how can we get it to you in the best possible way?

I know in several areas we are seeing, not only this Government but other governments move to that single-access, one window. It is interesting that it has.

Being part of the previous government, it was a slow process, and I can see it still being that way. I see it moving in the right direction, but I can tell you it is something that businesses picked up on about 20 years ago. It just seems to take that much longer to filter through government and through bureaucracy, but also it has to have the will of the people in charge to make it happen, and, I think, it is a good thing for people. Anytime you can present access to people without the difficulties of running to and from different offices and dealing with different people, I think it is a plus for the people.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spoken on the \$850,000. It is not that it is a bad idea. I just think that you have left out probably 85 percent of the people in the province of Manitoba. They do not feel that they are a part of this initiative because it was not specified. It was something that was designated for that particular area, and, I think, that is a mistake that governments make.

* (10:40)

I can give the government of the day another example of where you choose to pick one specific part of the province or one area of the province or one part of the city and support it against the rest of the province or against the rest of the city, and it creates problems. I can see that this is going to be a big problem for governments as other people become aware of the initiative, as other people see things happening in certain communities and say to their members or to us: Why did we not get in on that, or why were we not made aware of that? The response from you, I suspect, to be honest to the people that you are dealing with, and from us is going to be the Government chose a specific area only, and by doing that, they have basically ruled out a large percentage of the city and a large percentage of the province.

Governments are not elected to be responsible for small groups. Governments are elected for all of the people. Whether they voted for you or they did not, your responsibility is to deal with all of the people in the province of Manitoba.

When this type of legislation or initiatives are brought forward—and we have seen it. It has

been an ongoing stream since the new government took office, that they pick a problem, they go and deal with the problem, and in some cases perhaps they deal successfully with it, but they create huge other problems again because the people say what about us? Why are we being left out of this equation? What have we done to offend the Government that they are not prepared to offer the same options and same opportunities to us?

I told the members opposite I would give them another example of exactly where that happens; that is in the highways project. For years the people of Manitoba were responsible for the dust control on their gravel roads. Recently, the minister of highways announced a program for northern Manitoba, \$4 million to control dust, never said anything to southern Manitoba, never said anything to the rest of rural Manitoba. Those people now feel offended by this Government because you have picked a specific area and said this is where we are going to spend our money. This is the program and the rest of you guys can like it or lump it; you have no choice.

I think this Government is going to find themselves getting into more and more divisiveness in this province because they pick and choose who they want to be the winning areas based on the politics of it, not based on the fact that it is good for all Manitobans and should be implemented on behalf of all Manitobans.

The other part of the resolution that I would like to talk about, and I spoke earlier about it, was when you are trying to create an incentive or an initiative to create and develop, you just cannot isolate one group of people. The Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), who spoke previous to me, talked about the homeowners grant. Yes, it may not apply to this specific group of people, but there is a group of people out there that benefited from that program.

We saw housing construction and we saw new homes being bought and we saw new homes being developed and renovated. Is that bad? I mean, why say to one group we do not want you to build your new homes anymore, but then say to them we are going to take all that money and put it into this area. I think it is a

sharing of it, and I think the Government's idealism has gotten in the way of what is right for the people of the province. I think it has created an unfairness, and I think this will come back to bite this Government. It did years ago when they became the government of interest groups as opposed to the government of the people. When that happens, eventually the interest groups get fed up with it, the frustration. They want more and the people that are getting none just want access to something. They want it to be fair and equal.

So I will conclude. I do not feel I can fully support a resolution that just says we commend. If it was suggesting that we do something then we could have actual debate on what the resolution was offering. Thank you.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): It is great to be able to speak on this resolution today that demonstrates that the current government understands the problem of urban decline in larger urban centres in Manitoba, something I think is obvious by the remarks put on the record by the two members opposite, the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), and the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that they did not understand the problem that has faced Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. Perhaps it is that they did not care that in the 10 years of their government there was a huge decline in the property values, particularly in older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, that there has been at the same time a problem with urban sprawl.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So I want to respond to some of the comments put on the record by my colleagues across the way. I always enjoy responding to comments put on the record by the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), given especially that he was the Minister of Housing for at least about five years, I think. I want to first explain to him the reason this program is targeted in the way it is, is those are the older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg that have been selected under some of these programs for the current year. Those are the areas that are suffering the worse urban decline. Those are the areas that have been agreed upon under the tri-level single window for the Housing initiative. We used the City of

Winnipeg's neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. They were selected jointly. They are the ones that have suffered the most under the previous government, that were ignored; the problems were not addressed in any kind of comprehensive way. There were a few dollars here and there under the WDA, but not the kind of program that we have in Manitoba now that is being recognized, not only across the country but internationally as being a comprehensive neighbourhood revitalization program that is using a community development model that has housing programs and addressing housing needs at its core.

So (a) the issue is targeting the money into neighbourhoods that are in most need; and (b) it is targeting the money in such a way that there will be an impact. If the dollars are spread across a large area throughout Manitoba, the number of programs would not result in the success we are already seeing through these programs in these older neighbourhoods. Mr. Speaker, already, in some neighbourhoods, you are seeing the property values turn around. There is a reverse, there is an increase in property values in the neighbourhoods that have been targeted in this program already. That is going I think to get more attention shortly.

So those are two of the main reasons, to explain to the members opposite. Obviously, they do not understand the relationship between urban decline and urban sprawl. They are advocating for continuing a program. I believe they are referring to the tax break on new homes. The majority of those homes were not in older neighbourhoods, they were in the outlying areas of Winnipeg, having the exact opposite effect of what you want in a neighbourhood renewal program, which is to encourage infill housing.

The second issue that members opposite were talking about is the RRAP program. I remember being in the member's seat across the way and asking for the reason why the former government did not put its money on the table in terms of the RRAP program. There were a number of years where they did not match their contribution with the federal government. This Government has taken RRAP very seriously. That is a program that is province-wide. It is available throughout the province and this

Government has negotiated with the federal government to assume responsibility for administering the program. It has put an additional \$2 million a year into the program. We are seeing the results. I think we are going to see some excellent results as the new administration of that program really kicks in and the money starts to flow into the various parts of the province that can uptake on that program.

* (10:50)

I want to respond a little bit as well to the comments that the member put on the record about the approach that this Government is taking to Gilbert Park. Here is an example where the minister is actually going to have to listen to his own words. Under the former government, it was public housing developments across the province that would call me and ask: Why is only Gilbert Park getting the advantages of the tenant management program, the so-called tenant management program that was in place under the former government?

So there is an example where the former government, with no criteria, with no sort of explanation to other public housing, family housing developments in the province, selected that one complex and went way far and beyond out of their way to give them a certain kind of treatment that allowed them to have hundreds of thousands of additional dollars into their complex. Mr. Speaker, it is an example where our Government wants to have a system put in place for tenant management that will be comprehensive, that will be based on sound policy, that will be based on good administration and procedures, that will be available across the province.

I know that the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) has joined us now and is interested in using a bit of a different model. It is based on a co-op model that has been successful in Ontario. I think that we will be seeing the results of that in short order.

To get now to the specifics of what we are doing in Manitoba now in terms of housing, I want to talk a little bit more about the success of the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should

take for granted the significance of this, to have the three levels of government working together, not each going off independently and having their own housing program, but coming to some agreement that they are going to house them in one office so that the community groups that are going to utilize and benefit from these programs have one place to go where they can get information about all the housing programs from all different levels of government. That is no small feat to have accomplished. That is a huge undertaking.

I know the amount of work that went into negotiating and planning and developing and now implementing that office that is on Portage Avenue. I think that the success and recognition that that is now receiving by the community is something that also should be really recognized, that the community groups, I think, are understanding that this is really an advantage for them.

The fact that community groups are the ones that are driving this is another important component of this. This is not the Government going around deciding this is the program and this is the way that you are going to do it. The way that the homelessness and housing initiative works and indeed Neighbourhoods Alive! works is the community groups come up with the proposals, the community groups work together. They are the ones that develop a consensus in their neighbourhood. They decide where the needs are and which organizations should be submitting applications and how the applications are going to be developed. They bring that forward to staff and work together with the staff to fine tune. Then those go forward through an approvals process.

So this is not, as the member has suggested, some program where the Government is making decisions about which projects are going to be done in which place or which way. This is definitely a new model for the way government services are delivered, Mr. Speaker. It is completely community-driven.

We have tried, as a government, to provide the supports to community groups and help them to organize so that they have developed their own capacity so that they can fulfil the requirements under this program to include the

broad range and cross-section of people that live in these neighbourhoods. I think that is important for the members opposite to recognize, is that this really is a new way for governments to deliver service and to deliver programs. I think it is going to go on to be recognized as quite innovative and a good model to be copied across the country and in many other parts of North America.

I want to go back to the point that the member made initially about why we selected the neighbourhoods that we have, and I want to reiterate that that was done based on need, that it was done not at all on some sort of random basis, that there was a lot of thought that went into looking at a whole range of social-economic indicators that pointed to the five neighbourhoods that have been targeted as being not only the most in need but also that they had this capacity in some ways built up already, that there were neighbourhood organizations that were in place that could jump on board with these programs.

So in the future, there will be more neighbourhoods that will be designated, and I do not imagine that they will be in the Member for Southdale's (Mr. Reimer) riding. I do not think that there is a lot of urban decline in the Member for Southdale's riding. There are programs through the energy-saving programs for hydro. There are other programs that are available across the province, but, I think, it is really important for members opposite to understand that there is a need to target these programs based on the serious decline in older neighbourhoods and based on having an impact. If you spread the money all across every neighbourhood in the province, you are not going to have the impact. Mr. Speaker, there is not going to be the concentrated block-by-block redevelopment and improvement in housing that is going to turn these neighbourhoods around.

So I hope that message has gotten through to members opposite and that they will realize that it has been all three levels of government that have agreed to this approach. I think if you look at the literature and the research that has been done on urban renewal and on housing improvement, that that is what you are going to find. That is what every research study, any kind of

evaluation on these types of urban renewal programs has said, that you have to target in order to have an impact, in order to see success and in order to actually have that money that is invested be fruitful.

It is amazing, Mr. Speaker. It will work with Neighbourhoods Alive! and we are starting already to see some of the results from these programs. In some cases it is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

Res. 5—Changing Immigration Income Requirements

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., we will move on to the second resolution, which is Resolution No. 5, standing in the name of the honourable Member for The Maples.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), that

WHEREAS the ability of individuals to reunite with their family members residing in Canada is an important part of our humanitarian heritage; and

WHEREAS the current criteria for family class sponsorship of immigrants lump all cities with populations over 500 000 into one category; and

WHEREAS this criteria places Winnipeg in the same category as Toronto and Vancouver; and

WHEREAS the cost of living in Vancouver and Toronto is significantly higher than in Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS these federal criteria are putting Manitoba at a disadvantage in its ability to attract new immigrants and deprives Manitobans of their right to reunite with family members in Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to guarantee family class

sponsorships to Winnipeg be given special consideration due to its lower cost of living; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be directed to send a copy of this resolution to all members of Parliament from Manitoba.

* (11:00)

Motion presented.

Mr. Aglugub: I rise today to bring attention to an issue of great importance to the future of Manitoba. Immigration represents a significant portion of the new growth in the city of Winnipeg and elsewhere in the province. Many of the immigrants who came to Manitoba do so to reunite with family members who are already in this province.

In 1999, 3702 immigrants came to Manitoba representing only 1.96 percent of total immigration to Canada. While this proportion is up from 1998 when Manitoba received 1.72 percent of total immigration to Canada, the further promotion of new immigration to Manitoba is an essential part of any strategy for the growth of Manitoba.

Immigration to Manitoba is increasing. Some of that success is due to the new initiative that our Government has put in place to encourage new immigrants to come to our province. Immigration in 2000 was up 24 percent from one year previously. As we enter a new century, we must look at immigration as an important part of our strategy for growth.

Just as immigrants came to Manitoba throughout our history to help build this province, we must look again to the source of renewal and growth for our future. Today, there are over 100 languages spoken in Manitoba, representing people from all over the world, who have now made Manitoba home.

Manitoba's cultural diversity and vibrancy is further enriched by recruitment of immigrants to our communities. In 2000, a total of 4584 immigrants brought their skills, experience, dreams and hard work to Manitoba. Manitoba has encouraged the federal government to grant

the same proportion of immigrants to our province as its portion of the Canadian population.

Mr. Speaker, if this were to occur, Manitoba would be entitled to between 7500 and 8000 new immigrants each year, which represents 3.8 percent of all new immigrants to Canada. Manitoba is the first province to implement both an immigrant promotion and recruitment campaign in addition to the Provincial Nominee Program.

The Provincial Nominee Program helps fill vacancies in fields where no skilled workers are available within the province. A new business component has also been added to the Provincial Nominee Program to focus on attracting new immigrants with financial resources to establish new or operate existing business in Manitoba.

With programs such as these, Manitoba has been in the forefront in helping a proactive and strategic means to increase provincial population levels. Also significant is the fact that 28 percent of total immigration to Manitoba came from immigrants who fall into the family class. Family class immigration allows for family members of those who already reside in Canada to immigrate to this country.

In order to seek immigration to Canada under the family class criteria, the individuals or individual must have a relative living in Canada who has obtained Canadian citizenship. The family member may be a spouse, child or other close relative. The business of applying for immigration under the family class criteria is not a simple matter. Beyond being a relative of a Canadian citizen, the relative of the individual wishing to immigrate must agree to a sponsorship, which requires the person to provide financial support to the family member for 10 years. Citizenship and Immigration Canada assesses the ability of the sponsoring family to support a new immigrant under the family class based upon the income and other means of support available to the resident family.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It is these criteria by which the federal government establishes this income requirement

that is unfair to sponsoring families in Manitoba and unfair to our province in attracting new residents. This criterion is the low-income cut-off, or, in short, it is LICO. In order for a sponsor to be eligible to support a family class immigrant, he or she must show means of support, which is at least as much as this low-income cut-off. Of course, depending on the location in which the sponsor lives, the low-income cut-off is different, reflecting local cost of living and average incomes.

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada income requirement for immigrants under the family clause falls into several categories. For a sponsor who resides in Winnipeg, they fall into the most demanding category, urban centres of at least 500 000 people or more. This low-income cut-off category, which includes Toronto and Vancouver, puts Winnipeg at a relative disadvantage due to the low cost of living in this city. It is unreasonable to place Winnipeg in the same category as Toronto and Vancouver when assessing the low-income cut-off for Canadian sponsors of family class immigrants. A look at cost of living statistics across the country gives part of the problems. The average income in Winnipeg is \$24,184, Mr. Acting Speaker, as opposed to \$27,450 in Vancouver and \$28,980 in Toronto. Immediately, Winnipeg is put at a disadvantageous position due to lower average income in this city. The lower average income in Winnipeg as compared to other cities over 500 000 people is not an accurate reflection of the ability of Manitobans to sponsor family members to immigrate to this city.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada must immediately review these criteria to take into consideration the special circumstances of the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba. Under the current schedule of low-income cut-off in the family class immigration criteria, it is much easier for those living in Toronto or Vancouver to meet the eligibility requirement than it is for sponsors in Winnipeg.

The low-income cut-off, as established by the federal government, does not accurately reflect the cost of living in Manitoba in terms of the average cost of housing. While incomes in Winnipeg may be lower than those in other major urban centres, the cost of housing,

significantly, is also less. The average cost of a home in Winnipeg is \$97,824. Compare this with Toronto, where the average home is \$238,541, or in Vancouver, where the average selling price for a home is \$318,000. With such higher housing costs in these other metropolitan areas, how can fair treatment be given to Winnipeg through the current criteria?

Mr. Acting Speaker, these are my brief comments in support of the resolution. Thank you.

* (11:10)

Point of Order

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): On a point of order, I would request that you secure the doors and call a quorum count.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Could I ask all members present to rise in their places and ask that the Clerk at the table call out and record the names of those present?

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Mrs. Dacquay, Mr. Martindale, Mr. Santos, Mr. Reid, Honourable Mr. Smith, Mr. Aglugub, Ms. Allan and the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): As there is not a quorum present, pursuant to rule 4(2), this House is adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday. The House is now adjourned.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 31, 2001

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