



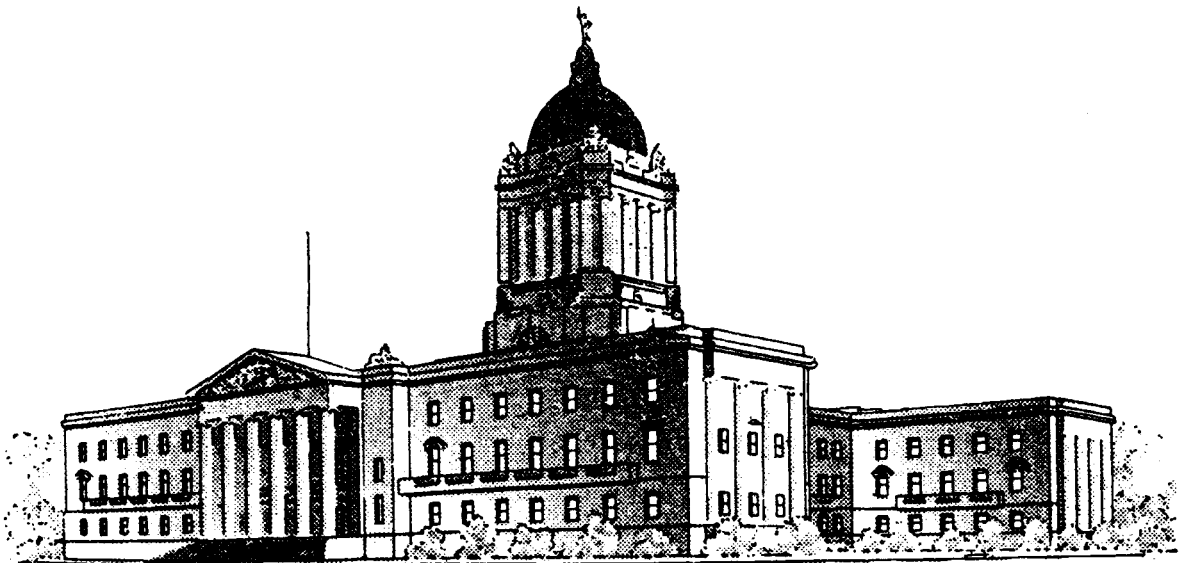
Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS  
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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

**Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation**

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 5, 1996

The House met at 7:30 p.m.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

##### HOUSING

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Housing. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on item 30.1.(b)(1) page 87 of the Estimates book.

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** I believe that the minister was in the midst of an answer, and he had agreed that he would table for me the information on the waiting lists that he was referencing in the House today. He was going to explain how, if the mortgages for the current stock of Manitoba Housing Authority were paid, those complexes could generate enough revenue through rent-geared-to-income. I hope that would be no higher than 27 percent rent-geared-to-income, and that they would be able to sustain themselves. I think that is where we were.

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** Mr. Chairman, what I should point out to the member, and I guess we can go back to page 33 of the annual report. As the member has mentioned, if we had taken out the interest in the amortization or the amount of monies that are owing and they broke even as the member was mentioning, if the units broke even, would we still make money under our present system? In looking at the figures and taking out the amortization and interest number of, say, \$30 million approximately out of the expenditure size, it brings down the expenditure size to about \$53 million. We would still have a shortfall of approximately \$9 million, so we still would be losing money in a sense of, we do not come to a break-even point. In essence, the rental revenue would not carry the present inventory and stock that we have within our portfolio.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I thought the minister and staff were indicating earlier that it would work out—[interjection] I will allow the minister to interrupt me here. He is going to correct himself.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister, to finish his response.

**Mr. Reimer:** I should point out, though, that they would carry themselves if it was under the sponsors, if it was the ones that were managed by sponsors. They would show a surplus because they are in a better operating position and their revenue positions almost neutralize it. They would look at, actually, a gain, from what I understand. It all depends on the occupancy and the fact that most of the managed units are elderly units so that there is a better take up and the expenses are not as great. They will operate in a positive cash flow. The other ones under our management, direct management, we would not be able to break even.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Is there anywhere in the annual reports that it indicates the length of the mortgage, the duration of the mortgage payments that are left on the Housing Authority's stock, as well as the sponsored?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think the member can recognize that, when the federal government and the provincial government and everybody got into the building of public housing, they were at different stages and at different times in the last 20 or so years, and even at that time there were various lengths of mortgages that were tied into various properties. But the majority of the mortgages, from what I am told, will go to a maximum of about 2030 or 2029, with the majority of them coming due around 2018 to 2020. So those are fairly long-term payouts.

There is a bit of a schematic on page 48 of the annual report that gives us a little bit of the amount of monies that are outstanding and some of the dates that we are talking about; 2029 seems to be the latest for the maturity date. So we are talking at interest rates anywhere from 8.25 percent to 14.5 percent.

\* (1940)

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am wondering, then, if the department has also put together a picture of the maintenance cost. I had referenced earlier that there is a specific maintenance schedule. There are inspections that are to be done. And I know that a lot of the housing developments have some pretty hefty repairs that are waiting to be done. I know that in one of the complexes that is in Radisson there is a requirement for some foundation work. There is some fairly costly maintenance that could be done.

I am wondering in any reporting that the department has done there is an overview of the maintenance requirements for each of the developments and if that kind of inventory has been costed and if the minister can tell us what that total is. Obviously, what I am trying to do is put together a picture of the sort of costs involved in maintaining this stock of housing. So I will let the minister answer that first before I carry on.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the department in looking at its M and I, maintenance and improvement budget, looks within a three-year cycle of repairs. That is a moving three-year evaluation of what should or should not be done in those units for the maintenance and improvement. We are looking at extending that into a moving 10-year program so that we can anticipate major capital investments further down the road of more than three years. Three years is a short-time cycle sometimes for major repairs and to look for it, so it is a much better overview in looking at a longer cycle. So this is what they are in the process of evaluating right now.

For the 1996-97 budget, what we have budgeted for is almost \$8 million, it is \$7.9 million in total capital projects. That covers approximately, without counting them exactly, I would say anywhere between 40 and 50 various projects throughout our Housing budget and our authority. [interjection] That is for this year '96-97, yes.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am understanding the minister to say that instead of just planning three years down the road, they are going to start doing their inspections and planning for 10 years down the road.

**Mr. Reimer:** That is true on a moving 10-year cycle, so it is a continuous thing looking 10 years down the road and projecting. That is right, as the member has indicated.

**Ms. Cerilli:** My understanding, then, means that every 10 years now, a complex will have repairs done.

**Mr. Reimer:** No. What it means is—

**Mr. Chairperson:** One minute, please. Order. Could I ask the honourable members to come through the Chair? It will make it much easier for Hansard to put your mikes on. We would like to keep this for the record.

The honourable minister, to respond.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson. What we are presently doing is when I say a three-year cycle, we program certain projects for improvement looking at what they might need within three years. Then next year, we will evaluate it again looking for what they might need but, at the same time, doing what is necessary in year one, which then year two then becomes year one next year, year three becomes year two, two years down the road. It is like a moving target on a three-year cycle. What we are proposing to look at now is a 10-year cycle which gives it much more efficiency and planning so that we do not get into too many surprises and major expenditures that we have not anticipated because of normal M and I and improvements that have to be done to some buildings.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I understand as well that there has been a major change in how the maintenance improvements are paid for. With the recommendations from the Auditor, now the modernization improvements cannot be paid through adding it into the mortgage and amortizing it. It has to be paid in a different manner. Is that correct? And how is that affecting the ability for these improvements to take place?

**Mr. Reimer:** What the member is referring to is an accounting system or an accounting procedure that is now part of all departments, and it is called accrual accounting. Accrual accounting is where your expenses and your expenditures are allocated during the year of the budget and are expensed during that year. They are not brought forward into when—let me use an example, repairs may be ordered on a building and then they are put into the budget. Then they become part of the expense at that particular time. Under the old system, what would happen is that repairs were identified and a number was put into the budget, but it was not realized until the project or until the actual expenditures occurred.

I am looking to my financial person here as I am speaking to think that I have got it in the right sequence.

To continue, under the old system, the expenses were extended over 10 years, and they were allocated on a one-tenth position of expenditure. Now they are put into the budget year that they are identified for, and they become the expense of that year. So it is an accounting procedure that the department has gone to. It is a true identity and a true identification of monies that are allocated and monies that are spent. It is a true expense. It is not amortized over the 10-year period or anything like that.

\* (1950)

**Ms. Cerilli:** That is what I was getting at. So does that mean now that they have to be paid for in the year that they are expended as they are identified in the budget, and would that not mean that you are able to do less expenditures because, as I understand it, the maintenance and improvement budget has actually been reduced? So it seems as if we are not going to be able to do as many repairs.

**Mr. Reimer:** In essence what you are doing, it does not diminish the volume of the M and I budget. It is an accounting procedure that, instead of spending \$8 million, as we have indicated here—under the old system we spent the whole amount, but we only identified one-tenth of it and then carried one-tenth, one-tenth for 10 years on our books. The whole amount was still spent. The budget that is now put forth in our allocation under Manitoba Housing is still the same, \$8 million, but it has been spent just like it was spent before. So it is not as if the budget would be decreased in any way. The accounting system would not affect the allocation of funding.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am not suggesting that it would decrease the allocation of funding, but that it would allow you to do fewer repairs is what I am concerned about. The deputy minister is shaking his head pretty vigorously, so I will accept that the minister is saying that is not the case, that this is simply a difference in accounting procedure, and it is not going to affect the ability for the Department of Housing to have to pay for maintenance and improvements over a longer duration, you know, over less duration so that they cannot do as many repairs. That was a concern that I had.

I guess the other thing that is related to these questions that I am asking is we keep hearing people in the community who are living in public housing and either the department should be commended for improving their maintenance and improvement division because some of these tenants are saying, wow, we have never seen such improvements in our housing developments, and some of them I guess are a little suspicious or skeptical and they know perhaps the government's bent for privatization, and they are wondering if their complex could be—being improved to be sold. Given earlier that the minister had said they are looking for unique ways and original ways for the management of social housing, I am wondering if one of the things that the government could be looking at is for certain complexes, perhaps the ones that are newer and have a longer mortgage and would be viable on the market, if they could be looking at selling them and then having them operated in the private market and maybe relying solely on a rent subsidy as a way of providing for the tenants. Is that an option that the government is looking at?

**Mr. Reimer:** I guess it is the old adage sort of thing that you are damned if you do, you are damned if you don't, in a sense, because I think what is happening within the department, and it is a reflection of the efficiencies of spending that we look very critically and very analytically at where repairs should be done. I guess it is like anything, if the units are kept in good repair, eventually they are not going to need as much to keep in repair because of the fact that everything is of a better standard and a better quality.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

That has been a part of the directive and a directive of the department to try to keep our stock in good shape and on an upgraded appearance and presentation at all times. I guess what we can say is that it is a reflection of the commitment to our staff and our people who are doing the work that they are recognizing there is a value to having places look good. If places look good, well, people are more prone to feel better about the place and themselves and to be part of the community. If we look at it the other way and neglected our responsibilities for the upkeep and the appearance of the places, we could be accused that way too of saying well, it is time to get rid of them and that they are of no use to him.

I can only say that I would rather be on the other side of having good-looking stock and inventory with Manitoba Housing and have people say that they are pleased with the appearance and the opportunity to live in our accommodations than to have them complaining about the other way, that things are run down and full of bugs that have to be sprayed for and things like that. As I say, it is a situation that I would rather err towards or be complimented towards, the fact that things are looking better than looking worse.

**Ms. Cerilli:** The minister did not address the crucial part of the question, which is, given that he has referenced the need to be creative and look at all these options, given the federal government's cutback and offer to take over public housing, is this one of the things that they are looking at, to offer properties to be taken over by the market and then try to provide income assistance through a rent subsidy through programs like SAFER or programs such as those rather than continuing to operate these buildings as public housing, or are there other options that the minister is going to be able to explain to the committee? I mean, he has made a reference a few times that they are forced to look at different ways of dealing with this because the federal government is bailing out, so what are the options that the Province of Manitoba is looking at if not the one that I have suggested?

**Mr. Reimer:** The member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), in a sense, is answering part of my question as she has alluded to that there is a tremendous change and tremendous pressure on public housing here in Manitoba and indeed in all of Canada. A lot of it has been initiated by our federal cousins, the Liberal Party in government right now, because of their cutbacks and the fact that they have indicated that housing will, over the next two years, lose around \$230 million right across Canada. Our portion of that, we are not too sure how much that is going to affect. I know we will lose some, but, to what degree and to what extent, we have not been made privy to. So we have to be prepared to look at any type of eventuality or any type of program or direction that we can still accomplish the goals that we have set out with public housing, and that is to be there for the people in need and to have proper accommodations and facilities for people that come to this government or placed in that position of need.

\* (2000)

As to which way we would like to go, I imagine the best way to go is to look at the best thing for the community and for the people in need and try to address them in every way we can, with the understanding that there may be some different ways of looking at providing accommodations to rental subsidy or through better efficiencies of dollars spent in the various allocations towards partnerships with housing developments or other areas of accommodations. These are some of the things that are coming upon us fast and furious, and the department is well aware of it and has made themselves aware to the extent that we are trying to look at this in a very positive manner in the sense of still providing the best housing and the best facilities that we can here in Manitoba for the people who need it. It is an interesting time to have this portfolio.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, given all the minister's interest, he is being pretty vague, and I am wondering if he could be a bit more specific about what kind of options the government is looking at.

As I said earlier, I have been in discussion with people from other provinces across the country faced with the same federal government and the same offer, and they are looking at all sorts of different things from turning public housing into co-ops, to selling it off as individual units, to having nonprofit corporations run it. So I am wanting the Minister of Housing in Manitoba to paint a picture for me of what he is looking at for this portfolio in Manitoba.

Has there been a paper or any research documented in writing on this for the province? I mean, what is the research department in the Manitoba Housing doing, and the financial area, to try and come up with a solution to this federal conundrum that has been thrust upon us here?

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairman, the member has alluded to various components of housing that do offer attractive alternatives, as she has mentioned, co-op housing and other types of endeavours, along with subsidized rent and things like that.

A good example of consolidation is where you have two buildings—this has happened—that are both half empty. It is feasible to look at combining the occupants

of the two buildings into one building and either selling off the other building, declaring it surplus and trying to sell it off. Sometimes it may mean in certain towns, where you have got chronic vacancies of some buildings, or in small towns, that these are buildings that we may have to make the decision that since they have been vacant so long, they are no longer of use to us and it is better for us to sell them to the town or to the municipality or just sell them outright to the tenants that are living in it. These are some of the things that are very viable options that we are looking at, yes.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Has there been specific examination on a complex-by-complex basis? Are there plans being made, as specific as the minister has suggested, where they are looking at the details of the situation for housing complexes in a given town and looking at comparing vacancy rates and the mortgage left and repairs? Has it gotten to that kind of detail at this stage?

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairman, the latest figures that I have—and I should point out to the member that in doing an evaluation of units, it is an ongoing evaluation, and one of the criteria that comes into play when we are looking at whether units are for sale for declared surplus is their use and need in certain communities. Sometimes what happens is, units will be getting close to the decision that they are surplus, and there is no need for them anymore. Then, all of a sudden, there is a call in the community for housing, so they are put back into the usage column. So things like this can change. It is a fairly fluid situation. What I may tell the member today, the units that are for sale or declared surplus, within a week or so, they may not be the same figure because of the situations changing in the various communities.

The units that we have for sale right now are just over 140 units. These are right across Manitoba that I am talking about. These are not Winnipeg. In Winnipeg, there are only four units for sale on Arlington Street, at the present time, that are listed. The rest of them are all outside of Winnipeg, and we are talking about units right from Manitou to Leaf Rapids. In Leaf Rapids itself, there is a 60-unit townhouse that is empty. So, when I talk about units of 147 and I talk of 60 in Leaf Rapids, the figures can get skewed because of one or two units. There are 30 units in Churchill. These are all surplus and have been declared surplus. So units per se have to be

taken with a grain of where they are and the circumstances regarding them.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So those 40 units that are in Winnipeg, those are the single-family dwellings that were—four. Oh, I thought you had said 40. Oh, there are four. So then the 35 that were single-family dwellings that had been for sale in 1994 are gone, and there was one boarded-up complex that had also been up for sale. I am wondering if that has also been sold. Well, I will let the minister answer that before I go on.

**Mr. Reimer:** I believe what the member was referring to is, these were units that we talked about in the last Estimates regarding the ones that were sold, or are you referring to the four that I have just referred to?

**Ms. Cerilli:** The letter I tabled in the House the other day in Question Period referenced 35 single-family dwellings that had been considered for sale. I am assuming then that those have all been sold or 31 of them have been sold anyway, perhaps, and then there was one other boarded-up complex. This was the former Minister of Housing who had referenced when I had written a letter asking about this. So I am wondering if these are new properties or if some of them are the same and where they are.

\* (2010)

**Mr. Reimer:** As mentioned before, the snapshot that was before the former Minister of Housing was that during that specific time when the letter was written.

What we are looking at now is sort of another snapshot, but it could be a continuation of a lot of units that were indicated in the former minister's letter that are still in this same type of disposition that they are still vacant and for sale. They may not have sold at all yet because I do not know if that was a finalized figure or that all those units have been sold, because a lot of these units have been on the market for a long time, like the one in Leaf Rapids. The 60-unit townhouse there has been on the market for six years. No one wants to buy it.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I want to get into the issue of 390 Behnke Road, because this does not seem to me to be making sense, but this is housing that is fully occupied. It seems like it is in good condition. I think there are

some windows that need replacing from my visit there, but I am wondering how this arrangement came to be that you would seriously be looking at selling this off so that it could be demolished so that they could install a parking lot for a hardware store.

I mean, the people who are living there are in an area of the city that they would like to stay in. A number of them, as I have said, have their children in school. It does not seem reasonable to those people who are living there now, but it does not seem reasonable to deal with an asset that is only 15 years old in this manner.

So I have gone to look up the value of the property according to the City of Winnipeg tax assessment. They tell me it is \$531,000 for that property and the land, that they are paying approximately \$18,000 a year in property tax, or you are, through the Housing Authority and the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, and I am looking for some explanation of how this came to be and how this can seriously be a consideration.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, the two complexes that the member for Radisson is referring to as mentioned are on Behnke Road. We had an offer to purchase that was presented to us by Home Depot. Home Depot, in doing their market analysis or their marketing plan, identified a location in southeast Winnipeg that they wanted to be in because of the market or what their evaluations were and they looked at where there was the availability of property. The piece of property that the member is referring to where the two units, the two 10-suite units, are located is part of a larger package.

The property around the two complexes is owned by the City of Winnipeg, and Home Depot went to the City of Winnipeg and is in the process of negotiating for a large piece of property in and around the two complexes. Also, there is a Hydro right-of-way in and around that property. There has to be a deal put together between Home Depot and Hydro to get the transfer of that land there too, plus the third part of the puzzle, if you want to call it, is the offer to purchase made to Manitoba Housing for these two complexes.

The offer to purchase that was made, as in all negotiation, can contain stipulations, conditions, suppositions, conditions not only on Home Depot's part, but, more importantly, on our part as to what we would

only entertain if we sold this property. We had put in a lot of stipulations as to the terms and conditions of the sale, naturally, the purchase price involved with it. At the same time we also had in mind the concerns and the well-being of the 17 people that occupy these suites, and I should point out there that 17 out of 20 that are occupied. Three moved, yes. So there are 17 residents that would be affected. Our concern was that, if there were any movement of these people, they would be accommodated in and around the area, and their moving expenses would be looked after. There would be incidental fees of possibly cable hook up or something like that, that would all be looked after. All of these types of concerns would be addressed if there were a sale of this property to Home Depot.

As mentioned, there has been no finalization on the agreement. There has been no written acceptance or written confirmation of the sale of this property to Home Depot from Manitoba Housing. It is still in the negotiation stage, but we are very concerned that the welfare of the people is looked after. We have offered comparable housing in south Winnipeg because it has been indicated that their preference is to be in and around that area. We have accommodated them to the extent that, if they are going to move, it is done out of the school year, before September 1. We have also talked to Home Depot, and they have given indication that they would even give very, very serious consideration to employing and offering employment to some of the people in this complex.

Home Depot, from our indications, has a very strong record with working with the community and working with community organizations and volunteer groups in their operations of business in the cities that they do operate out of, so that there was a comfort factor in knowing that we were dealing with a socially conscious company that had the concerns of citizens in the community they live in. So that is more or less a snapshot of what might or might not be happening on Behnke Road.

**Ms. Cerilli:** What are the conditions of the sale that the minister has referenced? What is the price that is being looked at for the property? I appreciate that some of those conditions may have been, as the minister has indicated, moving them in the summer and that kind of thing; but, as I have said, I am not just concerned about



the people that are there now. I am concerned about losing 20 units of social housing, of public housing, and I am surprised that the minister is not more concerned about that. So I want some explanation of why this would be the way that the government would want to go.

**Mr. Reimer:** I should point out to the member that in south Winnipeg right now there is a vacancy of about 70 units, vacant units that are comparable to the units that we are talking about at Behnke Road. That represents approximately—the vacancy rate in Winnipeg right now is around 700-and-something units out of 7,000. I think there are around 7,600 units in Winnipeg. There is approximately a 10 percent vacancy rate, which is around 750 or so, or 770 units. In south Winnipeg there is a vacancy rate of approximately 70 units, so there is adequate space and accommodations for the relocation of the 17 people on Behnke Road fairly easy.

It should be pointed out, too, that it also opens up the opportunity for these people, if they are looking at comparable moving, that we can also use rental supplement units, so these people have the opportunity to move into various districts through a rent supplement program also. We are trying to make it as easy as it is for these people to move to a location of their choice.

\* (2020)

**Ms. Cerilli:** A couple of things. I am sure that those 70 units in south Winnipeg are not the two- and three-bedroom units that are required by those families. The minister had said that he has an up-to-date waiting list inventory for public housing, and I would appreciate if he would show us that. Maybe I am misled, but I cannot see that the picture would change that much in a year and a half, when not too long ago it was over a year waiting list for those larger units, so that is one point.

I am sure that the 700 vacant suites, the majority of them are elderly persons, bachelor suites. We know that. The ones that are not are likely in Lord Selkirk Park and some of those other communities that are not in the areas such as St. Vital. I know that the waiting list for North Kildonan is even worse; the one in Transcona is even longer.

The other thing I want to say is the approach of Manitoba Housing generally seems to be that they do a

much better job in their management when they are dealing with the property and the maintenance and improvements side rather than on dealing with the tenants. We are not just talking about numbers here, we are talking about people. Maybe I will pause there until I have the minister's attention because I want him to hear this. [interjection] No, that is okay, you can answer the first part of the question in terms of the vacancies in the different types of units before I carry on.

**Mr. Reimer:** It should be pointed out that the average turnover in complexes is approximately about 30 percent or 35 percent per year of turnover of people coming in and coming out, so out of a 100-unit suite you are going to get at least 30 to 35 people moving or change of tenants regularly during the year.

In looking at the relocation of Behnke Road, the member is alluding to the fact that the accommodations in south Winnipeg may not be available. Our indications are, and the acceptance of the accommodations that have been made available to the people at this location that they are finding that the units we are offering are comparable and of a quality that they are accepting the transfer to these units.

In fact, I believe that there are only seven that are still to be relocated. The other people have indicated that they are satisfied with the relocation and the area that they are being relocated to. In fact, some have even relocated out of south St. Vital to other type of accommodation, so we are giving them high priority on the selection of comparable housing.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, the minister still left a lot of questions unanswered with respect to this. So even if you are placing them somewhere else, it means that other people are getting bumped, because, as I understand it, there still is a waiting list for the larger units. If there is not, we are going to get into that in a minute when we start talking about the rent increases. But there is no way, I do not think, that we can justify losing this complex, and I am wondering if the minister could explain the price—if that is going to change my mind on this if they have gotten such a good deal from Home Depot because of the surrounding commercial land. So, can the minister explain to me the financial picture on this?

**Mr. Reimer:** What I can point out to the member is that, this is as of March 1996, in the area 1.3 or the area—that is just a code number—but the area we are referring to there were 12 vacancies in two-bedroom units. There were 14 vacancies in three-bedroom units, and there were three vacancies in four-bedroom units. So there is, you know—those are a fair amount of units that are vacant. Out of a total of, in that particular area, there are 1,900 units, we are looking at a total vacancy of 60 units.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So the minister is saying that there are 60 units vacant in the south end of Winnipeg that are either two or three bedrooms and using that as a justification for flattening 20 units of public housing.

**Mr. Reimer:** No, I do not think—that is not the easy answer to it. The easy answer is that—there is no easy answer. I should not put it that way. Part of the rationale behind what is transpiring at Behnke is the fact that there is an opportunity for an economic development in the area that is going to employ 250 people. There is an opportunity for some of these people that are going to be relocated to be working in that particular complex. There is an opportunity for an injection of capital project of \$18 million of expansion in that particular area, and all the ancillary jobs and tax revenue that can be generated out of that particular endeavour in and around that property. The fact that we do have vacancies and surplus locations and the opportunity for these people to move into comparable housing. The offer is not only in that particular area but in other areas of the city where we do have vacancies, and the ability to move these people and still provide good, clean, adequate housing is really more or less a condition that we feel, you know, warrants a certain type of entertaining of this offer that Home Depot has made to us.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, I expect from this government that they would say that they have to disregard forests and mow down trees to create jobs, but I am surprised to hear they have to mow down public housing to create jobs. I still want to hear, though, the financial side of this arrangement to get these—how many jobs did you say?—250 Home Depot jobs. Okay. Let us hear the price that we are going to get for this public housing asset.

**Mr. Reimer:** The final dollar figure has not been arrived at as to within negotiation between Home Depot and the

province, and I am not at liberty to say right now what final dollar we will realize out of this, but it is in the negotiating stage at this particular time.

\* (2030)

**Ms. Cerilli:** It makes the minister's earlier statements of his commitment to social housing really hard to take. I mean, if we had other economic opportunities perhaps come along that would require the sacrifice of other public housing, would they be willing to go for those as well? I mean, this is ridiculous to me, even if you move these other families. You say you have seven left. They are each getting \$350 to move. I am surprised, as part of the agreement, you would not at least require Home Depot to cover their moving expenses, but—oh, the minister is nodding. It is a suggestion that perhaps they did not think of. I mean, this is Estimates. This is the public record. This is a public asset. I think the minister is under an obligation to be accountable for that and tell us how much we are selling off our public housing for. I am wondering, too, what does CMHC say about all this? I mean, is there any involvement of CMHC in the sale of this kind of property? They have had a hand in financing it. So I am hoping the minister would clarify those.

**Mr. Reimer:** I think what the member recognizes and, I think, she does appreciate is that you certainly do not negotiate in public for such a major expenditure and a major expansion of what is in the negotiating stage at this particular time. I do not think that it would be proper to tip Home Depot's hand, in a sense, as to what they are offering and what we are offering because it is a negotiated piece of property that we feel we have to be justly compensated for. I will make the commitment that once negotiations are finalized and a price has been agreed upon, I will make sure that the member for Radisson does get notification as to the price because it will become public record at that time.

As to the comment made, the people's moving expenses, all moving expenses, they will have no cost regarding the movement within—[interjection] We are. We will pick up all their moving costs. They will not have any costs regarding any type of move to any unit, whether it is in south St. Vital or out to The Maples or St. Boniface or to Ste. Rose.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I would think that Home Depot could afford to pay the \$350 moving expenses rather than having us pay for it, but I do not want to be paving the way here for this deal to go through, because I think that we should be looking at trying to maintain the public housing. I do not know if the minister has given up on Winnipeg and never thinks that it is going to grow again. Maybe under a new government our population would begin to increase, under the next government.

I am also wanting the minister to answer the question about CMHC. This is in some ways a test case. If it is easy enough for this to go through as quickly as it seems to, I am not sure when, and maybe the minister can clarify that, Home Depot first came forward with its offer. This seems to be happening fairly quickly. At least when you talk to the tenants they feel like it is happening very quickly, and I am wondering what kind of consultation and agreement they have to get from CMHC to make this kind of a deal.

**Mr. Reimer:** Two things, first thing, the moving expenses are going to be picked up by Home Depot, not by the taxpayers. Home Depot has agreed to pay for the moving expenses of these individuals.

The second thing, in regard to CMHC, naturally they are going to be at the door for their money when the unit is sold or if it is sold. Their interests have to be met and you can rest assured that they will be at our door seeking their money for the mortgage that is outstanding on that property. That will have to be addressed at that time too.

**Ms. Cerilli:** How about the City of Winnipeg? They are having to rezone the land. I guess from their point of view they are probably collecting a lot more property taxes from this, and I guess that is perhaps one of the things that has convinced the minister, maybe because he is also the Minister of Urban Affairs, I am not sure.

This just seems to me to be sort of a case study of how the attitude of the government could be moving in terms of public housing, and I would want the minister to confirm, when was the day that Home Depot first approached either the city or the minister's department?

**Mr. Reimer:** Our indications are that they first made overtures to the parties late last fall as to seeking some sort of purchase and/or deal regarding the city, the

province. As to the exact time, I just know, from what I understand, that it was late last fall.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Is there a deadline for when this agreement has to be reached? I mean, I know that the tenants have been told September 1. Is there a window that we are working on here in terms of time?

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairman, I guess with any type of commercial development or any type of endeavour that is put on the drawing board, you always have to try to have some sort of end date as to when you feel that you want to have the project finished and everything into place. Home Depot, in doing their planning and in their marketing analysis, have indicated that they would like to have the store open sometime in the fall of 1997. So we are looking at a fair amount of time before everything is ready to turn the key on the place. Our information is that it would not be until the fall of '97 before the complex is totally open and ready for business; in our perspective, because of the commitments under The Residential Tenancies Act, the movement of students and that has to be accomplished before a school year. So this is why the September 1 date has popped up in conversations and in discussions, but that does not necessarily mean that is the finalizing date for Home Depot and their startup time of construction.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am sure the minister can appreciate, I am not interested when, really not asking when the store wants to be open, but when this agreement would have to be reached on the sale of the property. You know, I think that is the date that I am looking for.

\* (2040)

**Mr. Reimer:** I can only say that, I guess, in the essence of time that any type of agreement is always tried to be completed in the shortest of time and in the efficiencies of trying to get all the legal work and all the zoning and everything out of the way. Dealing with three so-called jurisdictions, with us and the City of Winnipeg and Manitoba Hydro, it would be just speculative on my part as to say when everything will fall in together and everything will be finalized. I just could not speculate.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So how does the minister respond to the concern that we are not just dealing with numbers here or just, you know, the idea that you can just move people

around and tear down housing, that we are dealing with people. On the other hand, we are also dealing with a long-term asset that could house people for quite a long time. So we are not just talking about the situation now in terms of vacancy. Hopefully, the city will grow again, and we have to be looking at the long term when we are talking about low-income housing.

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the things that we have always been very, very conscious of is the tenants, and not only the tenants in this complex but in all complexes as to their relationship with the MHA and the relationship with the tenants association and everybody that is in contact. In this particular instance, because there was that swirling of innuendo and uncertainty regarding what might or might not happen around there, we acted very quickly in meeting with the tenants and to bring them up to speed and to make them aware of any and everything that was happening in and around that area. So we have made a very conscious effort to be proactive in working with the tenants to keep them informed as to what was happening in that area.

The member is alluding to the overall picture of responsibility to social housing—to public housing, I should say. Our philosophy and our mandate as outlined in our annual report states that the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation and Manitoba Housing itself will continue to be a factor, and it has a mission that we have stated: to enhance the affordability and the accountability of housing; to maintain and improve the quality of the existing aging housing; to facilitate the market. These are very strong mission statements and guiding principles that the department and the government have before the public, and we will try to maintain and work very, very diligently in trying to work within those parameters. The commitment is there, and it continues to be there for public housing.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I think I should move on from this. I still think that—I do not know if we need another hardware store. A city the size of Winnipeg seems to have an overabundance of retail, speaking as someone who goes home down Regent Avenue every day especially.

I am wanting to get into some of the other issues around the vacancy rates vis-à-vis also the rent increases, and I was wanting to take a look at comparing the rents paid by people who are participating in some of the rent

assistance programs, say, for those programs, as compared to the rents paid by people in public housing and then people in the market. I am concerned that what is happening with the public housing is that it is not making much difference for a lot of the families that could live there. It is being priced out of the market, I guess you could say, where it is not a cost saving for the families that are employed particularly. I am wondering if the department is doing any kind of comparison or what they are doing to try to address this vacancy problem and if they attribute some of the concern to be tenants saying, well, their rent is going up. They know perhaps that other provinces have had the RGI go to 30 percent, and they are choosing to move. I am wondering what the strategy is to try and deal with this vacancy problem. We have talked about this before, and I know that the minister has said that they were looking at, especially in the area of the bachelor suites, they had some kind of construction program to make some of them combine and make them larger, but I am also thinking that part of this is just the pure economics.

We know that co-op housing is being priced to the market, and I am concerned that public housing is as well. When you look at some of the areas where the vacancies are, there are a lot of other social problems and there is also a higher vacancy rate in the private market housing in the city, in the rental market. I think that we are into a problem here. I am also wondering, I have had people suggest to me that perhaps the government as a whole does not lose money when they do not have to pay the subsidy on some of the vacant suites. So that is another issue I want to explore with the minister.

What is the real cost picture in terms of the vacant suites in buildings where they are not then having to pay the subsidy?

**Mr. Reimer:** I should point out firstly that the rent or the RGI, which is the rent-geared-to-income formula that we use for the calculation of rent in our public housing, has not changed. Our rental rate has not gone up. We still charge 25 percent for bachelor units and in the North and rural and in unsettled northern communities, so that is still 25 percent.

For other units we charge 27 percent of the income, so our rate has not changed as have other provinces and has been initiated by the federal government, where they have

advocated and sent letters not only to Elmer MacKay, Minister of Housing, but also Mr. Dingwall, to increase the rates to 30 percent. We have not moved. We are still at 27 percent.

\* (2050)

Our rates are not going up, so I think the member may have been alluding to something that was not within our purview or control where rents have gone up. I should point out too that our average rent for a two-bedroom unit is \$346.76, but on the so-called open market or in the private sector the average rent is \$560. That is a very, very significant difference in range from \$560 to \$346, so we are very, very advantageous in our rental rate in our public housing. If anything, in comparison to what is happening across Canada, we are still very, very generous in our support for public housing in the rental rates that we are charging. So I would have to disagree with the member when the comment is made that our rental rates have gone up.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So how does the minister explain the vacancy problem? Is it a management problem? Is it a tenant relations problem?

**Mr. Reimer:** I have a strong temptation to allude to a former time of government, when buildings were being constructed, and there was a tremendous amount of bachelor suites that were built. This is where our highest percentage of vacancies are, in our bachelor suites, and we do have an overabundance of bachelor suites in our portfolio for public housing. That is where the majority of our suites are vacant. A good example is when we look at 185 Smith Street, where we have 373 units there, and we have vacancies in there of about 113. So, I mean, we are looking at almost over 30 percent vacancy in one building alone, and that is mainly because these are bachelor units. In overall, you know, perspective of public housing, it is an imbalance of one type of unit that has skewed the tremendous amount of vacancies, but, in the units of one and two and three bedroom, there are still vacancies, but not to the high degree that we have in bachelor suites.

As to what we are going to do with bachelor suites, the member is asking, a lot of times it depends on the structure and the engineering evaluations. We sometimes cannot do anything about these suites because of their

construction and their bearing walls and the configuration of the buildings. We cannot touch these and knock out a wall. The suggestion is made, well, why do you not just knock out a wall and make two bachelors into one one-bedroom or something like that. If it was that simple, in a lot of units, I believe that we would do that. In looking at these things in a simplistic way, it can happen, but, when it comes down to the engineering and the safety factor and the fire code preventions and the various acts that come under public housing and tenancy requirements, we cannot comply with them, so that way we cannot reconfigure our buildings. So we are stuck sometimes with inefficiencies that are just part of the way things develop. It is unfortunate, but these are some of the things that we are faced with.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Let us talk about 185 Smith, because I have also raised the issue of the attempt there to have a program to house mental health patients. I want the minister to know that I would support that if it is done effectively with the proper supports, and I know from talking to people with the Canada Mental Health Association that there are a lot of models and good examples for how this has been done with other public housing so that there is successful integration and cohabitation, if you will, of tenants in an apartment that are seniors as well as mental health patients.

I want to let the minister know that I heard an amazing presentation at the CMHA conference about Greenwood in Toronto where they have done this very successfully. They have taken the people who were otherwise homeless and they have created quite a community where they live co-operatively, so there are young people who previously had been wards of the state, who are then on their own as adults, with seniors and all sorts of folks. I have got some materials with me on this.

The other thing I wanted to point out, though, that with the 185 Smith, as I understand it, some of the tenants who are outpatients who were being placed there are seniors themselves, so it is not like you are having a real difference in the age of the tenants. I am quite concerned as the minister said, that there are 113 vacancies there, and this is not something that is new. It has been an ongoing problem, and it seems like this government cannot get its act together between the Department of Health and the Department of Housing to come up some

kind of program to provide the support for all those suites to be filled with tenants.

We know that there are a lot of folks who could live there who are living in horrible conditions not too far away in west Broadway or other parts of the downtown Winnipeg area, so there is no shortage of people who could go there. This government was part of the deinstitutional programs in the Department of Health.

I have with me a document from the U.S. Department of Health of Human Services called the Blueprint for Co-operative Agreements between Public Housing Agencies and Local Mental Health Authorities, and it lays out sort of a how-to for these kinds of projects, and one other one that is called Creating Community, Integrating Elderly and Severely Mentally Ill Persons in Public Housing. I will be happy to send these over, because I think that we could make this work.

There are lots of innovative things going on in other provinces which take much more of a community development and a social welfare, I guess, approach to the services that are provided through public housing. We know that the government is looking at better ways of dealing with community based health care, even though their approaches on home care are not so far proving successful. We know that a building like this would need some kind of a home care support program, and there are excellent models for that that could be done here. So I do not understand what the problem is with the government in Manitoba, why they cannot come up with a project that would work and we could see the quality of life for a lot of people improve.

The other thing, in terms of the vacant suites, I think other places have also used the bachelor suites for student housing. Dormitory-type housing attached to universities is usually a bachelor suite anyway. I am wondering if the government has looked at anything like that for the vacant suites in Manitoba, particularly those that are in downtown Winnipeg, in around the University of Winnipeg, or other areas where they would provide accessible housing for students.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairman, the member is alluding to a lot of very excellent and very interesting programs and concepts that are transpiring in other areas but, at the same time here, we are also looking at various

components and various utilizations of our units in co-operation with Manitoba Health and Mental Health in looking at utilizing our units also. In fact, just recently in regard to mental health issues in social housing, a working committee has been established. A consultative team, with representatives from the Manitoba Housing Authority, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Salvation Army crisis service and Mental Health services, has joined in a working committee to determine the feasibility of applying components of a plan to public housing properties in our particular area.

\* (2100)

I should point out too, there is a pilot project going on at Carriage Road with Mental Health for the development and utilization of units in that area. There is also a program at 101 Marion where a community development program has been initiated. So we are of the same opinion as the member for Radisson that there is possibly an opportunity for utilization of some of these properties. As much as a department—it has just been pointed out to me that one of our employees is now a member of the psychogeriatric ad hoc committee to work out of Riverview Hospital in regard to some of the issues the member is alluding to. There is an opportunity there for the utilization of some of our units.

Where there is a concern, to a degree, is where the overlap of authorities come in, whether it is a health problem, a public housing problem, a geriatric problem. These are some of the things that we have to look at and be concerned about as to where the priorities and the decision making comes about. We can be the suppliers of the physical assets or the physical entity, which is the housing component of it. The administration of it, the maintenance and the interaction of the people in the complex is something that also has to be determined and the responsibilities of authority that has to be delegated during that decision making too is something that has to be of concern.

We in the housing sector, as Manitoba Housing, have to be aware of the overlap with Family Services, with the Health department and, to a degree, sometimes even with Justice. So there is a juggling act that has to be brought into play when these decisions are made.

**Ms. Cerilli:** What is happening then with identifying people, in co-operation with the Department of Health,

for those suites and doing the planning so that they can be integrated into those buildings? I mean were the staff with the Housing Authority trained at all?

I understand that they should not be the ones that are carrying out any kind of home care support if their job is to deal with administration management, but even the people that are going to be issuing notices to tenants or going to be communicating with tenants in any way who are not the tenant relations staff. I understand there are two staff at 185 Smith whose job it is to sort of do that kind of interaction work with tenants, but I think that there needs to be other co-ordination for all the staff.

Particularly because the Housing Authority offices are in that building, I think it would be important for all the staff with MHA that are going to have contact with those staff to have some training, plus it is looking at providing a range of support through the Housing Authority for all the tenants in that block. I mean all of them are seniors, and I am concerned that there is not a very progressive approach to looking at how home care services can be provided or other recreational services can be provided, or support services, I should say, can be provided in those buildings because I would think that a lot of the tenants there need that kind of support, not just the ones that are being moved in as part of a mental health housing program.

I am asking two things, the training and the availability of training for the Housing Authority staff, plus the availability of support staff who have more expertise in dealing with these type of tenants with special needs. Then I am also interested if there is some arrangement being made to co-operate with Health to identify additional tenants that could be moved there.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairman, I should point out to the member that there are resources that are available at the particular location that the person is being housed in. In some cases, it is home care that comes in to look after these people. Other times, there is a resource person right on staff to help co-ordinate and to direct people who are having a problem. If a person comes into—well, for example—185 Smith Street and is referred to the complex through the Mental Health branch, with that referral comes a contact person in mental health. The authorities at 185 Smith then would have a direct contact to someone in the Mental Health department that if there was a

problem or some sort of concern that arose with this individual that they have a contact to try to look after the situation that might arise. So that is done automatically that the contact person is made aware of when the person is registered to live in, like I say, 185 Smith Street.

So every effort is made to try to be aware of the individual when they move in and try to satisfy their problems or their concerns that might arise in their daily living there. It is something that unless we are made aware of or the people, like I say, in 185 Smith are made aware that the person has a mental health problem, they would not know unless they were referred to by Manitoba Health.

**Ms. Cerilli:** As I understand it from talking with the Canadian Mental Health Association, they do not believe that it is enough to rely on the mental health worker. I mean those workers have caseloads of 100 people and they are not really there. There needs to be someone who is going to get to know those tenants. I had referenced earlier the program in Toronto and they have an incredible arrangement where staff onsite, and it is all done by agreement with the tenant, the individual tenant, because there are issues of confidentiality as the minister has alluded to, but there can be agreements made so that there is sort of monitoring of medication and that kind of home care support. I think that is what we are looking to here. I am wondering if progress has been made with the Department of Health to sort out those roles and responsibilities and if we are going to have some kind of—I do not know if it would have to be cost-shared or if in fact the Department of Health would see that there is, especially if there is already home care support in there—some kind of program established so that these people are going to be successfully integrated.

\* (2110)

**Mr. Reimer:** I can refer back to what I was talking about just a little while ago in regard to a working group that has been established and it has been established very, very recently. I can just point out that—in fact, I will read it out of the contents here—a joint Manitoba Housing Authority, Mental Health Services working group committee was established to respond to the problems and the issues that were raised. The committee was to review existing practices, resources, and identify areas requiring development. As mentioned, this is a team that consists of the representatives from the Manitoba

Housing Authority, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Salvation Army crisis service and the Mental Health Services of Manitoba. So we have moved, and we are moving, towards that type of recognition of concerns. As mentioned, this is very, very recently that this is set up. In fact, this is a new direction and a new choosing that we have decided to move towards. So there is a recognition as the member said that there is a need for it, and we are addressing it through this working committee that has just been established.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I am wondering if the minister can tell us what the time lines for that committee are in targeting to have a full system up and running so that they can fill those suites, and also how many suites they are targeting at 185 Smith for mental health patients or any other blocks. But I am wanting a little bit more detail than about the plan that this working group is working on.

**Mr. Reimer:** These are relatively new conversations, not only for the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), but also for myself in a sense because this was just a working group. In fact the date of some of these directions is May 29, 1996, so we are very, very new. So it has just very, very recently been formed.

I can make the commitment to the member for Radisson that, as we get into the process with this and as it is developed, I can have an update for her as to some of the working guidelines and some of the parameters that are being expected from this. I can only guesstimate that the time line would be within maybe six to nine months that they are looking for a finalization or a report to be forwarded. But I do not know, I would not want to be pinned down. That is strictly speculative on my part because of the fact that, like I say, this is relatively less than a week old that this committee has been formed.

**Ms. Cerilli:** The minister knows that I raised this in the House earlier on in the session, and I made reference to documents that are dated November 1995 from Manitoba Housing Authority and September 1995, so it is not a new issue. I guess all that we can do now is encourage the minister to ensure the department gives this attention because it is one way that they can deal with the vacancy problem in some of these blocks.

A couple of the other ideas I think that have been used in other places to deal with the vacancies, and I am

wondering if this is being looked at here, is providing housing for other special populations. For example, the issue of shelter for individuals who are living with AIDS is one thing that comes to mind. I have a booklet here on housing for AIDS patients. The other special population that I am thinking of, particularly in some of the rural areas, I am wondering if the department has considered trying to negotiate with Family Services and turning some of these vacant complexes into shelters for domestic violence, for children and youth, street kids, that there are other special populations that require housing that government also has responsibility for, and I know that particularly in some of the rural areas there is a real need for domestic violence shelters. Given the high number of vacancies in some of the rural areas, I am wondering if the department has considered any of those kinds of projects.

**Mr. Reimer:** One of the things we have done on a very consistent basis is try to work very closely with the tenants associations of various complexes and compounds in and around Winnipeg and other areas, and we have more than readily made units available for daycare. We have made them available for, I believe, like for example in Gilbert Park we made them available for the Boys and Girls Club. We have made units available for Family Services, I believe, in Gilbert Park. We are looking at a very innovative approach at Selkirk Park right now in Winnipeg where we are looking at using one of our units as a police local office, right in the Selkirk Park area.

At the same time and also to utilize one of the units with Health in regard to some of the health problems and things like that, we are more than willing to accommodate needs and the utilization of these units, in units where there is a chronic vacancy problem. Usually the chronic vacancy problem is related to some sort of social problem or a condition where people do not feel safe, so we feel that we can accommodate innovative approaches and innovative utilization of some of our units.

I remember going into Gilbert Park, and one of the units was used, as mentioned, by the Boys and Girls Clubs, and they were using it to renovate toys and fix up toys. They had, I do not know how many, two or three youth in there and they were working, and those are valuable resources and valuable utilization of our units.



We have been very open to suggestions as to which is the best use in the usage of our units. So we will continue to do that. I think that if the tenants associations have innovative ways of further utilization of an office or community usage we will entertain those suggestions. The better that the whole complex is utilized and there is a sense of community that is developed by being part of that housing project the better it is for everybody.

\* (2120)

**Ms. Cerilli:** I appreciate the minister's comments, but I was specifically making reference to shelters in rural areas, and I am wondering if you would follow up on that or tell me if that has ever been considered, where the entire unit or complex would be used as a shelter.

Additionally, I am wondering what kind of research the department is doing in this area. Again, there are some pretty innovative things being done, particularly in British Columbia, where they also had similar problems with crime and lack of community safety in areas where there was public housing, and they initiated a youth program with the Canadian Red Cross, where they trained young people in a peer support model who then went on and trained their peers, and it has been proven to reduce the crime problems in the area. They have had really good results, and it seems like the kind of idea that we need to transplant here to Winnipeg. I am sure agencies like the Boys and Girls Clubs or the Y or the Red Cross could help provide the training.

I am concerned if there is no development of these kinds of programs from the Manitoba Housing department here. It seems to me that this was something that British Columbia came up with. You know, I was concerned at this conference in Vancouver recently that there was no representation from anyone from Manitoba, and I am wondering how it is that the government is looking at research or development of programs to address the kinds of problems that the minister is talking about, the kinds of social problems that are perhaps exacerbating the vacancy problem for public housing here at home.

I would just encourage him to look at that. I, myself, am going to pursue this program from British Columbia that tried to deal with the crime problems among young people. Like I said, some of them have been studied

more than three years after, and there is still a long-term effect, a noticeable and documentable difference and improvement in the community where they have undertaken this kind of community development approach.

I know we have talked before in Estimates about the huge potential in social housing to have that kind of a community development approach and to deal with other social problems by working with community agencies or tenant groups, but it seems that here in Manitoba there is not a lot of innovation going on. I am hoping the minister can explain why that is.

**Mr. Reimer:** I should point out that we do provide 10 shelters right now throughout various parts of Manitoba, women's shelters, I should say, so we are involved with that type of facility. We also do provide housing for AIDS patients. There is housing that we are in the formative stages of for diabetes, setting up of housing for diabetes patients and also for dialysis patients. These are innovative approaches and an ongoing approach that we feel that we can make to the people of need in the various aspects of Manitoba, so I feel that we have the availability to make changes and to act swiftly.

As to working very closely, we do work very closely with Family Services in some of the problem areas that they have for the provision of shelter for people. As mentioned before, we work very closely also with Health. So our Department of Housing has become more and more available for innovative approaches from the various departments for the utilization of accommodations, not only in Winnipeg, but in all areas of Manitoba. The women's shelters, I believe there are 10 altogether, they are spread out through all of Manitoba. It is not just strictly Winnipeg where those 10 shelters are.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I just want to—before moving to pass the different lines, if the minister can clarify if those are units or buildings that are being used as shelters.

**Mr. Reimer:** Those are 10 separate buildings, those shelters.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** The line under discussion at this point is 30.1. Administration and

Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$577,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$127,000—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from Urban Affairs (\$211,200)—pass.

30.1.(c) Executive Director's Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$108,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$21,800—pass.

30.1.(d) Financial Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,233,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$191,800—pass.

30.1.(e) Corporate and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$550,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$271,500—pass.

30.1.(f) Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$683,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,005,300—pass.

The next item for consideration is 30.2. Housing Program Support (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$146,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$30,400—pass.

30.2.(b) Research and Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$247,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$68,400—pass.

30.2.(c) Technical Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$305,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$121,100—pass.

30.2.(d) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$859,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$340,700—pass.

Resolution 30.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,120,000 for Housing, Housing Program Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1997.

The next item for consideration is 30.3.(a) Transfer Payments \$35,127,300.

\* (2130)

**Ms. Cerilli:** Before we just go to the end, I want to ask one question about the staffing. Are there any vacant

positions currently in the department? Have all the positions that were vacant earlier this year been filled?

**Mr. Reimer:** For clarification, I guess I have to qualify, is it in MHA or MHR?

**Ms. Cerilli:** The whole thing, the department with support programs, the entire responsibility for Housing in Manitoba Housing Authority, in the Renewal Corporation and in the other department areas.

**Mr. Reimer:** There are presently seven vacancies of various sorts from maintenance co-ordinators to tenant relations services, maintenance chief. Yes, seven present vacancies.

**Ms. Cerilli:** That is quite a few. Is the minister going to make a commitment that those are all going to be filled? I know that particularly of concern are the maintenance co-ordinator positions and the tenant relations people. We had earlier discussions about how important those people are especially in the larger complexes.

**Mr. Reimer:** Four of them are in the recruitment process as we speak. There are only three that are in the pending file right now, so four of them are already being recruited and they may be being filled right now because this sheet is a month old.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Is the tenant relations co-ordinator position one of the three that is not being recruited for?

**Mr. Reimer:** One of them is, yes, and it is in the recruitment process right now too.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So that one will be filled.

**Mr. Reimer:** It is in the recruitment and evaluation and, as I say, this is a month old, so it may have been filled already. I do not know for sure; I do not think it has been. I should not say that, but from indications, they are recruiting and they are interviewing right now.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Okay.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** The next item for consideration is 30.3. The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (a) Transfer Payments \$35,127,300—pass; (b) Grants and Subsidies \$6,320,300—pass; (c) Homeowner Emergency Loan Program \$60,000—pass.

Resolution 30.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,507,600 for Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 1997.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I also do not want to not ask a question about the Home Renovation Program that was eliminated in this budget. What is the explanation of not continuing with that program?

**Mr. Reimer:** That program has proven to be a very, very big success and igniter of tremendous amount of expenditures. The original program was approximately \$10 million which was announced in 1994. It carried through 1994 and 1995 with the intent originally of \$10 million. The budget for it came in just over \$10 million. There was approximately 9,600 applicants that were approved for renovations of their homes. The percentage of takeup on it was almost exactly as the population of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba with about 56 percent of the pickup for the program in Winnipeg and the rest in the rural area. I will see if I can still keep it in my mind what the percentage was. It was under 100,000; 41 percent were paid to homes that were valued between \$75,000 and \$100,000; 33 percent between \$50,000; and \$75,000 and 26 percent of the grants were paid to people under \$50,000. But the largest majority, 41 percent of the grants went to people with homes from \$75,000 to \$100,000. So the total amount of monies that were generated through the program was well over \$74 million, so it had a tremendous spin-off effect as to other monies being spent. That worked out to approximately 1,200 person-years of employment through this program for the two years.

It has not been extended. It expired in December of '95, and at this time there are no plans to bring back a program of this nature at this particular time.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I know it was a great program. That is why I asked why you did not renew it.

**Mr. Reimer:** Oh, I thought you wanted to get—I just wanted to get some of those things on the record.

**Ms. Cerilli:** No, I am glad you did. You put all that good information on the record. It was a good program. Just to clarify, there was a \$10 million budget for it, and

it created how much employment and how much economic spin?

**Mr. Reimer:** It generated \$74,083,391 worth of renovation activity, and that relates to 1,260 person-years of employment.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Person years?

**Mr. Reimer:** One thousand two hundred and sixty person-years of employment.

**Ms. Cerilli:** So why are you not going to continue it then? It sounds like it is a good program.

**Mr. Reimer:** The program was initially set up to be a stimulus back in 1994 and worked through 1995. It served its purpose. As to whether it comes back, that is a budgetary decision that has to be made within the whole total context of all department expenditures and studies and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in his evaluation as to the priorities of spending of Manitoba and where our budget is going. So I could not speculate whether it will come back.

**Ms. Cerilli:** He will be waiting for me to lobby for that one in Question Period so he can get it back. That is okay.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** Shall the resolution pass? The resolution is passed accordingly.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Housing is item 1.(a) Minister's Salary. At this point, we would request that the minister's staff leave the table for consideration of this item. The item under consideration here is item 30.1 (a) Minister's Salary \$12,600. Shall the item pass?

\* (2140)

**Ms. Cerilli:** I just wanted to ask you again with respect to the proposal for the sale and demolition of the Behnke Road property. Is that something that is likely to go through, or is the minister still open to having the case made for maintaining that public housing stock?

**Mr. Reimer:** As indicated to the member previously, we have put conditions upon any type of disposal of that

piece of property. We are very concerned that the conditions are met, that there is fair representation made not only for the monetary aspect of what is expected from that piece of property but, more importantly, what we are concerned about and have concerns about is the proper concerns addressed by the tenants and the people who are living in those 17 units. That is of prime importance, that their concerns are met. That would be part of any type of decision that would have to be made on the sale of the property before it is finalized.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Well, it seems like the concerns of the tenants are going to be the department's responsibility. So I am not sure what kinds of concerns of the tenants that Home Depot or the City of Winnipeg could address. Maybe the minister could clarify that, because it seems to be that that is in some ways a red herring to me. I mean, the issue is the property. The minister claims that he can move the existing tenants, but the issue is the future tenants or the tenants that could live there. So, I mean, what is it that the Home Depot is going to have to guarantee?

**Mr. Reimer:** When I say the guarantee made by, pardon me, the terms and conditions of the sale of Home Depot, it involves not only the monetary aspect of what the department is looking for as a return on the property but also the fact that the responsibilities that they have indicated that they are going to make to the tenants in that area regarding the relocation and the allocation of fundings for the moving expenses and for the indication that they have said they are looking at the possibility of hiring people from that particular area. We take those overtures seriously that they have a commitment in the area.

The City of Winnipeg in its dealing with Home Depot, I am not privy to their conversations and their negotiations and to their stipulations that the city has put in on their chunk of the property that they are negotiating with Home Depot. I am not aware of what Hydro's negotiations are regarding the right-of-way and the access and the availability of property that Home Depot is negotiating with Hydro, plus, I believe, there are also concerns for the ease that they would want off St. Anne's Road, I guess it is. Those are things that the City of Winnipeg has to address with them. I believe that the zoning application is coming up sometime in June or early July, from what I understand, regarding the whole

piece of property. It is like a set of dominoes, things have to all fall in place before the whole thing is finalized, and a lot of the factors that still have to come into place, I can only speculate as to how and what might happen because I can only address my end of it which is the property on Behnke. So as for the total complex, I can only speculate as to what the city and Hydro are negotiating. It is hard to say how the whole project will fall into place.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** Under consideration is 30.1, 1(a) Minister's Salary \$12,600—pass.

Resolution 30.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,571,200 for Housing, Administration and Financing, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1997.

## SENIORS DIRECTORATE

**The Acting Chairperson (Mike Radcliffe):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates for the Department of Seniors, Seniors Directorate. Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement for the next set of Estimates? The will of the committee?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** Proceed. Is the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) ready to proceed? Does the honourable minister for this department have an opening statement?

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister responsible for Seniors):** Well, certainly. Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure, as Minister responsible for Seniors, to present the 1996-97 budget Estimates for the Seniors Directorate. Seniors are the fastest growing segment of our population. From 1891 to 1921 about 5 percent of Canadians were seniors aged 65 and over. This number has increased dramatically with the 1991 census estimate showing the proportion increased to 12 percent. Projections for the future are that by the year 2020, with most baby boomers retiring or retired, seniors will comprise an unprecedented 17 percent of the Canadian population.

This growth in the number of seniors is occurring not only because of the aging of the population segment but also because of increasing life spans of both men and women. We must pay attention to this ongoing demographic shift and its complications for governments in order to ensure that the future brings adequate personal security for seniors. In Manitoba the census estimates that seniors are 13.4 percent of the Manitoba population. By the year 2016 this proportion will increase to 23 percent or higher. Governments at all levels in partnership with communities and seniors have a role to play in examining the issues and then identifying solutions in order to provide seniors access to safe and supportive living environments.

The role of Seniors minister is a very important and challenging one, that of preserving and enhancing the quality of life for older members. Let me assure you that I take this responsibility with great enthusiasm.

I might just ask the Chair, what are the rules of sitting for tonight? Till what time?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I believe the committee has agreed to sit until 10:30.

**Mr. Reimer:** Thank you very much.

Our government, through the Seniors Directorate, is committed to working with seniors to find solutions to address these issues. Today I would like to outline the directorate's activities for the past fiscal year and highlight some of the new initiatives planned for the coming year. My staff at the Seniors Directorate work with me to ensure that seniors needs and concerns are considered when government policy and programs are developed. As you are aware, the directorate gathers information regarding seniors issues in a variety of ways but essentially from seniors themselves. The directorate has established close working relationships with seniors groups throughout Manitoba. This allows the directorate to have an ongoing dialogue with seniors on major issues of concern as well as providing information and other resources. The Seniors Information Line continues to be well used by seniors providing them with information assistance and referral. The types of calls received reflect the issues and concerns of seniors throughout Manitoba. In 1995 there were 2,031 individual calls. This does not include the additional calls made by the directorate on follow-up to various departments.

The following are some of the highlights of 1995. In June 1995, during Seniors Month, special celebrations were held in Virden and Winnipeg. This directorate works with seniors groups planning these events. The directorate who is supportive of a business library made its resources library available to the public in the summer of 1995. Printed materials and videos are now available for loan to individuals and groups throughout Manitoba. In August 1995, the directorate completed a new computerized housing directory to assist seniors looking for a place to live. The directory was developed as a result of requests from seniors on the Seniors Information Line and as consultation meetings held by the directorate and the Manitoba Council on Aging.

\* (2150)

Approximately 7 percent of all calls received by the directorate were questions related to housing. This information directory lists rental units, condominiums, townhouses, mobile homes and seniors residences around the province. The list includes housing available for rent, purchase or life lease. Directorate staff supported the Manitoba Council on Aging in undertaking consultations with individual seniors and seniors organizations on issues of concern in the fall of 1995. The directorate provides several abuse training workshops in the fall of 1995 for professionals working with the elderly. Directorate staff conducted two sessions, elder care and the organization and working with abused elderly persons, and the Manitoba Health Organization conference in Winnipeg, November 1995. Several presentations on retirement and positive aging were held for various organizations in the fall of 1995. Emergency information for seniors, a brochure on emergency preparation was revised and distributed.

The minister's column in Seniors Today continues to receive a very positive response. Seniors have told us that the information is useful and helpful. In addition, the directorate published the bi-annual seniors newsletter, The Seniors Source, first introduced in May of 1994. This newsletter has assisted us in keeping in touch with seniors, and, more importantly, has assisted seniors in keeping informed on current government programs and services that could assist them. Our next addition will be ready for distribution to seniors and seniors organizations in June of this year.

As you can see, 1995 was a very full and busy year, and 1996 will continue with a busy schedule. Initiatives for '96-97 include, the directorate staff had completed a trainers course and will be developing workshops for interested businesses, organizations and government departments. These workshops, entitled Through Other Eyes, will be designed to raise the awareness of participants to the special needs of aging adults and encourage change to resolve difficulties experienced by seniors and persons with disabilities. Working with Manitoba Consumer and Corporate Affairs, law enforcement groups and other organizations and agencies to explore means of raising seniors awareness to potential hazards such as scams and frauds, for example, alert bulletins will be circulated to seniors services, housing, seniors centres and possibly media outlets.

The overwhelming response to the original brochure Questions to Ask Your Doctor and Pharmacist prompted not only a reprint but has been updated to include additional information to assist seniors.

The directorate, in partnership with the Community Legal Education Association produced a brochure Legal Information Guide for Seniors that includes information on wills, estates and powers of attorney and health directories. These publications were recently distributed to seniors organizations across the province. In the first year alone, the directorate received over a thousand requests for the brochure. The directorate will be developing a second legal information guide to address topics such as door-to-door sales and financial abuse.

Federal-provincial territory initiatives include sharing information and developing several topics of concern to seniors such as managing the shift to community service, safety and security for seniors for the 1996 meeting of the ministers responsible for Seniors in New Brunswick, working with the federal and provincial governments to recognize the United Nations International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

As you are aware, the Manitoba Council on Aging began reporting to the Minister responsible for Seniors in May of 1994. This has been an extremely positive move for the Council on Aging.

The Manitoba Seniors Directorate and the government of Manitoba, with the council reporting directly to the

Minister responsible for Seniors, I am able to hear firsthand their issues and concerns of seniors in Manitoba. The direct link between minister and council ensured that seniors advice, experience and knowledge are available to government in formulating policies and programming. It is extremely important that seniors have direct input on issues that affect them and in the future.

Initiatives for 1996 and '97 include holding community consultations. These consultations provide an opportunity to consult with seniors and other organizations identifying needs and concerns of seniors throughout Manitoba and recommend ways to achieve these more efficient and effective services and inform seniors about the Manitoba Council on Aging.

To date, the council has met with seniors in Gimli, Steinbach, Portage la Prairie and Brandon. Meetings in Dauphin, Beausejour and Flin Flon are to be held in 1996. Information in fact information sheets. the council and the directorate will be working in partnership to put together a series of fact sheets for Manitoba seniors. Topics include apartment security, purse snatching, lost or stolen wallet and card replacement and tips on moving.

Recognition project, this project will honour individuals, organizations or businesses who through exceptional acts or efforts benefit seniors or whose valuable services reflected a positive attitude toward older Manitobans.

In closing, I believe that the Seniors Directorate and the Council on Aging have and will continue to have an important role to meet the needs of Manitoba seniors. We are all working together in partnership to benefit seniors. It is important for government, community and organizations to share ideas and develop a common vision for the future, to have a plan that will provide for the full participation of seniors in all aspects of our society, one that protects their dignity and choice and independence. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** We thank the minister for these comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Broadway, have any opening comments?

**Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway):** To alter the mood of the Estimates proceedings, let me start with a joke about

the exasperated medical doctor who, upon hearing constant complaints of a 90-year-old man about his left knee, said, for heaven's sake, Morris, act your age, what do you expect? And Morris replied, look here, doc. My right knee is also 90 years old and it does not hurt.

If such conversation meant anything at all, it dispels the myth that aging means illness. Aging does not necessarily mean sickness or senility or sexlessness.

If aging does not mean sickness, senility or sexlessness, how are we to explain the process of aging?

Under the general category of the so-called error theories of aging is the wear-and-tear theory which suggests that the human cells lose the ability to repair the damaged deoxyribonucleic acid, known as DNA, substance that passes genetic information from one cell to the next. Consequently, the cells become less efficient. They become error-prone in carrying out the vital functions such as metabolic rate at which the cells convert nutrients into energy which cells need to live and to reproduce. Logically then, if we reduce the caloric intake of human beings, we may slow down the metabolic rate, and if we slow down the metabolic rate we slow down the rate of damage to the cells; hence, theoretically, we also lengthen the human life span.

In conversation with many seniors on many occasions, particularly those seniors who appear to me healthy and fit, I invariably ask them this question of how often and what do they eat. From the answers that I gathered, I came to the generalization that healthy people eat very little, although they may eat more frequently, and they mostly eat little bits of fish or chicken or vegetables, and most of them eat mostly fruit.

Another set of theories, known as the program theories of aging, posits that genetically determined changes are there according to some internal clock that starts ticking at our conception and is programmed to run only for so long and no more, with the genetic code carrying out the specific instructions to facilitate the processes of growth, maturation, decline and, eventually, death.

About 25 years ago a certain Dr. Leonard Hayflick and his associate found that embryonic human cells in tissue culture have inherent capacity to divide only about 50 times and then they die. This is known as the Hayflick

phenomenon which rules out immortality among human beings made of flesh, skin, blood or bones.

\* (2200)

One version is that the DNA coil to form a helix of a constant or diminishing circumferences around beads of proteins to form a superhelix which work like a clock spring, slowly ticking away biological time which then goes through a genetic switch from growth to its peak and then to decline. Given this programmed clock theory of aging, how are the specific instructions of the internal genetic clock communicated to the cells of the human body?

Along with the hormones like estrogen, testosterone and dehydroepiandrosterone produced by the adrenal glands, the human body has an immune system based on the thymus gland which is most efficient during our childhood and adulthood in recognizing and counteracting invaders that enter the human body like viruses, bacteria and toxins. This organ, the immune system, decline in efficiency and effectiveness among older people, which explains why older people increase susceptibility to infections and to a variety of illnesses.

Also, as a result of the decline of the immune system, the body is less able to distinguish what is the self of the human body and what is the nonself. Therefore, there are certain malignant cells that have all the opportunity to grow in our old age, and they get themselves established in the body, and the self cannot recognize them as nonself and therefore they develop into tumours and cancers.

Now, if this is the process by which people age, what are the observable changes in our bodies that we can observe in an almost predictable way according to this biologically programmed clock theory of aging? Well, if you observe, in the process of aging, our hair either falls off—the minister had lots of them, used to when he was young, but now they are few—or in my case, they stay there but they turn gray.

The epidermis of the skin becomes dry, and the middle layer of the skin becomes less elastic causing the skin to sag and to wrinkle, and the protective pigments forming cells that absorb the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays are reduced by approximately 15 percent for every decade of life that we live, increasing our susceptibility to skin

cancer. So, you know, the older you get, the more you expose yourself to the sun, the more risk you are taking.

What happens then to the vital organ of the human body as people go through this process of aging? Amazingly, in the absence of any disease at all, the human heart, the central generator in our physical body, amazingly, the human heart of a normal 80-year-old person who is not sick at all can pump blood as effectively as a normal 30-year old person. However, as people grow older, of course the blood vessels of the human body lose their elasticity.

If the lung of the individual is uninfected, it is a healthy lung. Between the ages of 30 and 80, this lung loses an average of 40 percent of maximum breathing capacity as a due course in the aging process, and as the human body gets older, the liver and the kidney lose some 50 percent of their efficiency. Therefore the drugs that we imbibe, the alcohol we drink, remain longer in our body, so the older you get, the less you should drink.

The bone mass which reaches its peak at the age of 30 begins to decline by 1 percent every year of our lives until osteoporosis, which is a state of bone structure, sets in when the bones become thin and brittle. Osteoporosis, of course, is accelerated by such habits like cigarette smoking and heavy alcohol intake, resulting in fractures, particularly of the hips, with crippling effects for some of the elderly.

If we know all these things, what are the ways by which we can prepare for these as we age? How can we overcome the debilitating effects of aging, particularly the onslaught of sickness or disability?

Among the various ways of preparing for this and preventing old age from being a period of sickness, a period of senility and sexlessness and despondency and depression are the following. First, we modify our diets. Second, we must appreciate and, of course, implement moderate exercise, and third, we must develop a positive style of life characterized by a set of personal habits.

With respect to diet control as a way of counteracting the effects of aging, the older we get, the more we should avoid eating meat, but we should eat more of fish and chicken, more of vegetables and greens, more whole grains and fruits. If you are used to eating meat and

would not survive without it, if you are a meat-eating person—I call them carnivores—eat game meats such as buffalo and venison meat. A four-ounce serving of buffalo steak contains only two grams of fat compared to 10 grams of fat in a similar four-ounce serving of sirloin beefsteak. As we grow older, the more we should avoid saturated fats from animal sources such as fat from swine meat, otherwise known as pork, despite our advertisement in Manitoba Pork.

The older we get, the more we should concentrate on food items that have nutrients, foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals, food that even has curative powers, for example, garlic. Of course, some of you do not like the smell of garlic, but garlic kills bacteria. It stops infection. It is estimated that one medium-sized clove of garlic packs the antibacterial effect of about 10,000 units of penicillin. Garlic reduces blood cholesterol; it prevents blood clots which cause strokes or heart attacks, so you can see the importance of that little item that you can get anywhere.

Onions, they lower cholesterol, they stimulate digestion, and, when you eat them raw, it detoxifies your human body. There are some onions that are sweet, Spanish onions, for example. Leeks are vegetables that are related to onions. Leeks are rich in potassium, in magnesium, in silica, in iron, in calcium, Vitamins B and C. Leeks and onions are both laxatives, diuretics; they also aid digestion with a warming and relaxing effect on the stomach.

It has been said that the historian Pliny wrote about Emperor Nero eating only leeks and oil when he wanted to keep his throat healthy for singing purposes, for singing performances. So he only ate oil and leeks. Probably these leeks explain Nero's stamina in fiddling and in singing while Rome burned.

Turnips are good. They are a good blood purifier and natural diuretic. They work on the urinary system, helping to eliminate the toxins that we accumulate. In Canada, one traditional folk use of turnip is to drink the turnip juice to treat stomach ulcers and to eat the pulp of the root for good working bowels.

Whole natural grains like rice, wheat or barley are desirable sources of carbohydrates and energy. It is good for all the people to develop a liking for whole wheat pita



bread, particularly. Whole wheat pita bread, like whole wheat bread, is more nutritious than bread made from refined wheat. Pita bread has almost no fat, and they contain only about 75 calories per ounce.

Fresh fruits are another group of food that contain vitamins and minerals needed by the human body, for example, cantaloupes, bananas. Cantaloupe is rich in potassium, which strengthens the heart of the muscle. Half a cantaloupe contains double the amount of Vitamin C in one orange fruit.

Having discussed the factor of diet as a way of overcoming the debilitating effect of aging, the next factor I mention is exercise, moderate and regular exercise. This is essential in order to live a healthy, satisfying and long life. There are activities that we can do on a regular basis without taking any extra time from our routine of work. For example, climbing the stairs instead of using elevators, biking along designated routes, walking. These are forms of exercise that we can do without spending extra time like going to a gym or for a physical workout.

For example, walking 20 minutes a day for at least three times a week, three times a week is a good regimen to follow. If anyone wants to lose weight, then he or she should walk a total extra 20 minutes more.

\* (2210)

**An Honourable Member:** That is 40.

**Mr. Santos:** Yes, if you do that, then you will lose your weight, but if you maintain one, then you will just maintain yourself.

In this connection—why? Why is this so? There is in physics, in science, a law known as the second law—the first law of thermodynamics. It states: If we consume more calories than the amount of calories that we can burn up in exercise, the excess become fat and it is stored in our body. Therefore, if you want to lose weight, we must consume fewer calories and then we must burn them up.

To be more specific about walking as a form of exercise, walking an extra 20 minutes a day will burn up about 100 calories. In the course of a month, of course,

you will be shedding at least one pound a month. If you increase that 20 minutes to one hour a day, you will be losing at least three pounds a month. Can you imagine how much a year you will lose?

Finally, a third factor that contributes to good health in old age—and I am trying to say this so that everyone may hear—is the development of a healthy and desirable lifestyle. A healthy and desirable lifestyle for a person of any age, but particularly for senior citizens, is that kind of life that is characterized by healthy personal habits. A desirable lifestyle is both an attitudinal as well as a behavioural state of mind that contributes to a pleasant and good quality of life. The earlier in life we develop such desirable lifestyles and we nurture them and maintain them, the longer period we can have a pleasant and good quality of life as an individual on this planet Earth.

Therefore, what is the best route to follow? One good attitude is of course to do everything in moderation. Do what you love doing, but do it moderately, so long as it does not negatively impact on your physical and mental well being. Do things and develop the practice of having a well balanced sense of humour. When it comes to loss and adversities in life, we need to do the best we can and to accept the facts as they are. Let us develop and maintain outside interests by engaging in habits that stimulate our mind and that engage our body physically. One form of exercise that may be recommended, of course, one that offers a moderate amount of resistance, is exercises between couples. It might have an exhilarating effect, physically, emotionally and mentally.

But we must avoid excessive stress, and we must manage the stress when it comes. We should develop good quality relationships with someone to whom we can give support, so they can return it to us when we feel that the world is closing upon us. The older we get, the greater is our need to be active and to stay active, socially, politically, as well as physically. Sedentary behaviour like watching television most of the time of the day or night among seniors is not necessarily good. It will be against our object of having physical fitness and having a good quality of life in old age.

In terms of having some joy in life, of course a little red wine can have beneficial effects, but we must not take more than three alcoholic drinks within any 24-hour

period, because alcohol can have debilitating effects upon us, both physically and mentally. If we find ourselves in the category called smokers, then we should stop smoking and right now. Eighty-five percent of lung cancers are caused by smoking.

I will tell you some personal information right now. My brother who is younger than me, I warned him a long time ago not to smoke. He can hardly breath now. He is now in the Foothills Hospital in Alberta on oxygen, and I may have to leave and see him before anything happens. I was afraid it might happen before the session ended, and I was waiting and waiting.

Whatever happens to our lives, we are always a contributory to it. Heart disease, most of it being the direct result of smoking, kills more than two million people every year. We should exercise regularly because exercise improves heart and lung functioning and helps us reduce stress which also adversely affects the efficient functioning of our immune system. Regular exercise means 30 minutes activity that increases the heartbeat a little bit more and is done at least three times a week.

Let me conclude by saying that the kind of life we should lead in old age is largely a product of our own choices, a product of our own doings. One obvious reason why many people are not having successful aging and are in poor health condition is it is the cumulative result of their unhealthy style of living characterized by addictive smoking and heavy drinking. Sometimes the root cause of unhappy old age is personal financial problems. Again, this sad state of affairs might have been the product of one's riotous and extravagant spending, including addiction to gambling and financial gaming. Negative attitudes in life, lack of activity, perhaps plain ignorance, might constitute the other variables that lead to an unhappy and unhealthy life in old age.

Psychosocial factors, positive or negative, have a lot to do with successful or unsuccessful aging. One significant factor is our own control by which we measure our own sphere of autonomy. Control over many aspects of one's environment involves one's ability to make decisions regarding choice of activity, the method, the manner, the timing, the pace and other features of our own activities. Older people generally experience a reduction in control

for a variety of reasons like physical impairment, reduced financial capacity, institutional living arrangements.

For example, in a study involving a comparison of the senior residents of two retirement settings, residents of low-constraint retirement villages were found to be more in control of their own activities and their own lives, and so they perceived themselves to be so. They scored higher in life satisfaction and adjustment than residents of a relatively high-constraint setting of a retirement home.

In another study, a total of 72 subjects, with an average age of 78 years old, they were randomly assigned to three groups. The first group was given verbal encouragement in individually completing a simple jigsaw puzzle. The subjects of the second group were given direct assistance, and the subjects of the third group received neither encouragement nor assistance beyond the initial instructions.

The results showed significant improvement to the encouraged group, significant deterioration to the directly assisted group in the form of learned helplessness, but no change for the third group that received no experimental treatment. Therefore, encouragement is control-enhancing, direct assistance is control-reducing. Some sense of control is essential for the well-being of the elderly, as it is essential for people of any age.

\* (2220)

Support is another psychosocial factor that has a positive effect on self-reported well-being. What does support mean? Support means the enhancement of the material, informational emotional resources. It is more likely than not that providing help, care and material assistance from family members and friends of the elderly, before and beyond the requirements of professional medical services, is directly conducive to healthy and good quality of life at old age. If a senior has a personal network of people who encourage better nutritional practice, then health promotion will be increased and the risk of ill health is reduced.

Therefore, in a nutshell, to stay healthy longer, gerontologists strongly recommend that seniors stay out of the sun, stop smoking, cut back on alcoholic drinks, eat intelligently and exercise regularly. Thank you, that is my opening statement.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

At this time, we would invite the minister's staff to take their places in the Chamber. Does the minister have any staff present for his department? If so, would the minister's staff, please enter the Chamber? Is the minister prepared to introduce his staff member present this evening to the committee?

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Chairperson, it is my pleasure to introduce the Seniors Director Kathy Yurkowski.

Just for clarification, the Chairman might be able to clarify, is it the understanding that we are finishing the Estimates of Seniors at 10:30?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** That was the information that I was given. I was led to believe that this section would be finished at 10:30, and I would invite the critic of this section to respond.

**Mr. Santos:** I will tell you when it is 10:30.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** I think, Mr. Minister, we have had some response from the critic, and I guess we would proceed at this point.

**Mr. Reimer:** If there is a running over of a short period of time after the allocated time of 10:30, whether there might be a willingness to not look at the clock for a few minutes for continuation of questioning for a short period after, just in case we get into a discussion. Is there a willingness of the committee?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** Is there a willingness of the committee to ignore the clock and to proceed to complete the appropriate questioning?

**An Honourable Member:** I do not think so.

**Mr. Santos:** I would like to comply with the House resolution which states that these Estimates, according to the resolution presented in the Assembly, in the Chamber, start from 7:30 to 10:30.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** The item before the committee is item 24.1. Seniors Directorate (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$345,800.

**Mr. Santos:** Since I only have about 10 minutes, may I say that I am looking only at the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, and I will refer to the pages I will ask the questions from.

On page 12, on the third sentence before the end of the page, it says that one of the things that the Seniors Directorate has been doing: "Conducts public consultation with seniors throughout the Province." My question is this, in the immediate past fiscal year, what kind of public consultation has the Seniors Directorate conducted throughout the province?

**Mr. Reimer:** There have been consultations along with the Council on Aging in various locations across Manitoba. I can say that we have been in Dauphin, Steinbach, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, and we are going to Beausejour, I believe it is, within the next week or 10 days and then Flin Flon.

**Mr. Santos:** How is this conducted? How many people from your department went to these places and when, specific dates, time and place?

**Mr. Reimer:** I can supply the exact dates to the member. We do not have them in front of us right at this specific time, though.

**Mr. Santos:** I appreciate the minister's reply. I have to be very selective. Although I have lots of notes here, I only have a few minutes. Okay, on page 14, under Expected Results, Policy Analysis and Development, it says, "The expected results from the policy functions include: new initiatives to benefit seniors in Manitoba." My question is, what are these new initiatives that the Seniors Directorate has come up with and is expected to result in benefits to seniors in Manitoba?

**Mr. Reimer:** I can point out to the member that we have just initiated a program called Through Other Eyes, which is a simulation program of role playing, of taking this program into the workplace of various locations like, say, a bank or something like that and role playing with the individuals as to what and how they would feel if they were seniors and in the situations that they might encounter. We have also got brochures that we have set up and make available for seniors. There are consultations going on continually regarding seniors and

being a resource available for them at the phone and through various other aspects.

**Mr. Santos:** The second item there is about greater co-operation and consistency between departments in addressing seniors issues. The third talks about effective and appropriate government services for seniors. Can I have some specific example of the third kinds of effective and appropriate government services for seniors, a new one, I mean, in this fiscal year?

**Mr. Reimer:** I have the fortunate position of being the Minister of Housing and the Minister responsible for Seniors, and I see a fair amount of very close co-operation and co-ordination between the two departments. It is of great benefit, in a sense, that in fact just recently down in Niverville that we initiated a housing development because of the fact that there was property available through MHA that we were able to make arrangements with the seniors for the development. We also work very closely with the Department of Health and also the Department of Family Services, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, in concerns regarding seniors. There is a very close co-operation and co-ordination between the departments.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** The hour is now 10:30. What is the will of the committee at this time?

**Mr. Santos:** I will obey the mandate of the House.

**An Honourable Member:** Pass.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** The hour being 10:30 p.m., this section of the committee is recessed until 9 a.m.—

**An Honourable Member:** You can pass.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe):** Is it the will of the committee to pass the items? All right. The item is 24.1 (a) \$345,800—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$191,600—pass.

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$537,400 for Seniors Directorate for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 1997.

The hour being 10:30 p.m., this section of the committee is recessed until 9 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday), at which time this section will be considering Estimates for the Department of Justice, Aboriginal Justice Initiatives and the Status of Women.

Committee is recessed.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

Wednesday, June 5, 1996

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