

Title: Wednesday, October 24, 2007 Growth Pressures Committee

Date: 07/10/24

Time: 10 a.m.

[Mr. Dunford in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. I'd like to call the meeting to order and, of course, welcome all the members and staff. We need to begin by introducing ourselves for the record. Shelley, we can just leave your introductions until we actually get to your point in the agenda, assuming the agenda is approved. I'll begin, and then I'll move to the right. Clint Dunford, MLA, Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Taylor: Dave Taylor, MLA, Calgary-Currie.

Dr. B. Miller: Bruce Miller, MLA, Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Dr. Massolin: Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Roth von Szepesbela: Good morning. Katrin Roth von Szepesbela, legal research officer, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services.

Mr. Prins: Ray Prins, MLA, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Martin: Ray Martin, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Webber: Len Webber, MLA, Calgary-Foothills.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Corinne Dacyshyn, committee clerk.

Mr. Herard: Denis Herard, Calgary-Egmont. Good morning.

The Chair: Did we get that for the record? Yes? Okay. Thank you.

All right. Electronically things were circulated, and I would now ask for any additions to the agenda. Seeing none, can I have a motion to approve the agenda? Okay. I saw Ray Prins' hand first.

Also circulated were the minutes from the October 4 meeting. Any additions or deletions or changes? Seeing none, then I would ask for a mover of the minutes.

Mr. Herard: So moved.

The Chair: Denis Herard.

I guess we need to vote on the approval of the agenda first. All in favour? Opposed?

Approval of the minutes. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now, what else have I forgotten?

Mrs. Dacyshyn: That's it. On to number 4.

The Chair: Okay. I'm on track. All right. We're on to number 4 on the agenda, Review of Presentations Made to the Committee. Philip, if you'll do this for us. We've allowed, it looks like, about 11 minutes for you on this point, so we'd ask you to proceed with that in mind, if you will, please.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Will do. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to direct committee members' attention to the summary

of recommendations proposed by the stakeholders' document, and that was from the last meeting. If you could turn to that. The organization here: the idea is just to capture in the left-hand column the challenges and concerns identified. All those are quite familiar to committee members, I'm sure, and deal with the growth pressures. Then in the right-hand column there are the recommendations put forward by the stakeholders.

Now, what we've done is to divide those recommendations in two, the first being the recommendations that have possible legislative impacts or implications and then other recommendations. What I want to do right now is to highlight that first category, the recommendations with possible legislative implications. The first stakeholder we heard from was AUMA, and these are some of the main recommendations they put forward.

The Chair: I think for the record that maybe we should not use the acronyms. If you want to identify the group, please.

Dr. Massolin: Absolutely. Yes. The first stakeholder group is the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the main recommendations are as follows. They recommended that the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, be amended to impose inclusionary zoning on select developments through land-use bylaws. They also suggested amendments to the applicable building codes, as follows: to apply Built Green Alberta standards for new home builders; to review the Alberta building code in terms of safety concerns, including distance between buildings, a determination of height, and so forth, as you can read there. Fourthly, they recommended amending the federal Income Tax Act to encourage development of affordable rental units. Another recommendation that I'd like to point out here is that they also proposed that incentives be put forward for secondary suites. This is very much like what Edmonton's proposal, which I'll get to a little bit later on, was like.

The second stakeholder group we heard from was the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. Their first recommendation that had a possible legislative impact was to close loopholes with respect to the legislation on condo conversions. Secondly, they asked for an amendment of legislation to give family and community support services more flexibility to provide support. Currently, as I pointed out, there are legislative barriers that prevent the FCSS, the family and community support services, from using its funding, and that specifically means that they are not able to use funding for capital or operational funds. They also recommended the use of municipal reserves for affordable housing. They recommended changes to off-site levies and zoning, and they also recommended such things as density bonuses and to work with government and municipalities specifically with respect to development requirements.

If you turn to page 3, we can look at the University of Alberta Students' Union recommendations. The main one there is that the province should pay property taxes for student housing, or student housing should not be subject to such property taxes.

The University of Calgary Students' Union recommended that the Municipal Government Act be amended to include mandatory inclusionary zoning. They recommended as well that the province reconsider their two-year rent stability guideline. That was as a recommendation put forward by the Affordable Housing Task Force. Thirdly, they recommended the removal of the municipal tax burden assessed on existing and future residence facilities, and the idea is that the monies saved there would go into financing residence construction.

Number 1.5 lists the city of Edmonton recommendations, and the first one again is a recommendation to change the Municipal

Government Act to impose inclusionary zoning. Next, as you turn to page 4, you can see that the city of Edmonton gave us specific recommendations as to how to amend the Municipal Government Act. Part 2, for instance, deals with general jurisdictional clauses, and the recommendation is to expand jurisdiction to include regulation of affordable housing matters. Part 17 has to do with land use. Specifically, there is a recommendation to include in the text of the act a statement to give explicit jurisdiction to regulate matters of affordable housing.

Mr. Chair, would you like me to go through these specifically, or is it good enough that we have them listed there?

10:10

The Chair: No. I think you should take the time to do it as specific as you can, again for the record. I think the *Hansard* documentation of this is important for the people of Alberta.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Very well. Thanks. Division 4, then, of the Municipal Government Act deals with the municipal development plan, and the recommendation there is to specifically reference affordable housing.

Division 5 has to do with land use. Again there's a recommendation that specific reference be made to affordable housing as a matter that may be included in a land-use or zoning bylaw.

Division 7 is with respect to subdivisions. Again the recommendation is to include that specific reference be made that subdivision authority may impose conditions relating to affordable housing.

Division 8 is with respect to reserve land. The recommendation is to include specific reference to affordable housing as a purpose for land dedication.

Those are the specific recommendations with regard to the Municipal Government Act. There are a few other recommendations, including a recommendation to amend legislation to allow municipalities to regulate condo conversions. Now, there I should also point out that the city of Edmonton presenter indicated that this could be done through the establishment of linkage fees for such condo conversions, and that money could go to investing in affordable housing.

The city of Edmonton also recommended the amendment of legislation to make it easier to use surplus school reserves for affordable housing. They recommended that personal or corporate income tax breaks be implemented to offset the costs of providing for secondary suites or that the legislation be changed to allow municipalities to provide property tax incentives.

Now, the last presenter, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, really didn't have specific recommendations. They just simply provided us with some very useful information with respect to the situation of housing in general and affordable housing in specific.

What I'd like to end off with, Mr. Chair, is just to briefly go through the city of Calgary submission, which we received in written form. If committee members have that document, I just want to highlight two recommendations, 10 and 11, because those are the ones that have legislative impacts. Recommendation 10 from the city of Calgary's written submission recommends that "the Government of Alberta should enable and encourage municipalities to comprehensively develop surplus school sites for purposes that include affordable housing." It recommends that this be done through "transferring these sites into municipal ownership and providing Municipal Government Act (MGA) exemptions to remove municipal reserve (MR) designations from them."

Recommendation 11 indicates that "the Government of Alberta should amend the MGA and the Condominium Property Act to

enable municipalities to require developer contributions of land and/or money to affordable housing."

So that's the summary of the recommendations.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I want to notify the members that we have received follow-up from the city of Edmonton and the University of Alberta Students' Union. If you recall, we did the normal practice of reading questions into the record. So we're still waiting for follow-up, and those will be circulated, I believe, prior to the next meeting but certainly upon receipt.

Now, on the agenda we've provided time for municipal affairs of 10:15 to 11:15. I think we're pretty well on track. I'd just advise the members that if we want to talk to Philip about his presentation, we can return to that, then, later on in the agenda.

Deputy minister, if you would introduce yourself and your cohort, and then the floor will be yours. We've allowed an hour. I know that our invitation suggested legislative or other policy solutions, but being the benevolent person that I am, I don't usually confine members to, you know, strict parameters, so I won't confine you either. If you would keep in mind that our basic focus here, primarily, through discussion has been, you know: what are the legislative barriers holding us up to solving the problem?

So if you would proceed with introductions and then your presentation.

Ms Ewart-Johnson: Thank you very much, Chair. My name is Shelley Ewart-Johnson. I'm the deputy minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On my left is Robin Wigston, who is the ADM, assistant deputy minister, of the housing services division. On my right is Brian Quickfall, who is the ADM of local government services responsible for the Municipal Government Act. Next to Brian is Line Porfon, who is a director in the housing services division. Behind us we have Bill Strickland, who is our acting director of communications.

First of all, let me thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the progress in meeting the growing needs of affordable housing across the province. My focus today will be threefold. First, to outline the steps that have been taken by the provincial government and our department and other departments since the Affordable Housing Task Force report was completed and government responded in April of 2007. The second issue I'll talk about is the work that's under way by the cross-ministry assistant deputy ministers' committee to respond to the task force report that would be considered more short and medium and long term. Where are we at? What progress have we made? Last, to respond to questions that have been raised regarding the Municipal Government Act and: does the act inhibit the municipalities' ability to take actions in support of affordable housing? That, Chair, will be my presentation today. It will probably take about 40 minutes, and then we'd be very pleased to answer any questions. It might take less time as well.

As you know, the Affordable Housing Task Force was established on February 1 of 2007 and chaired by MLA Len Webber. There are two members of this committee as well who were on the housing task force, Ray Martin and Bruce Miller. The task force travelled to nine communities, met with a variety of stakeholder groups, and delivered the report and recommendations to the provincial government on March 19, 2007. The task force report contained a comprehensive package of recommendations focusing on the immediate, short-term, and longer term actions that would be required to meet the housing needs in Alberta. The provincial government studied the report and recommendations and responded on April 24.

The first response was the infusion of \$285 million in new

funding. This was combined with a series of actions to be taken to respond to the task force report and, more importantly, talked about the longer term planning and co-ordination necessary to really address Albertans' needs for affordable housing not only now but in the future.

Like other jurisdictions housing is an important issue for Albertans and a top priority for the government. We look at it as a housing continuum, and our goal is really to support individuals, communities, municipalities, not-for-profits, industry partners, and key stakeholders to collectively ensure that families and individuals become and remain housed. We accomplish this by facilitating a continuum that houses Albertans in need and also provides the adequate support services necessary to continue this service.

10:20

If we look first at the initial housing continuum – it's called prevention – proactive steps have been taken to keep families in their homes or to help newcomers in Alberta to establish a home rather than to fall into homelessness. I will get into the dollar details a bit later and also share with the committee the number of Albertans that have been helped to date. So that's first: prevention.

Next we have shelters and ensuring that homeless Albertans have a basic, secure shelter from the elements. Municipal Affairs and Housing funds ongoing operations of shelters, and the provincial homeless initiative provides funding for new projects and related services.

Next in the continuum is transitional housing. This moves Albertans up a step from homelessness and emergency shelters and provides more focused support with the goal of transitioning clients into more independent and stable housing in the affordable housing gap. This is also an area where we rely on other departments to assist, whether it be employment and immigration and some of their services or Children's Services. So we have this whole continuum of supports to provide to Albertans.

Lastly, the affordable housing, the closest step, we say, to market housing. This broad category is geared to Albertans whose housing need is mainly financial. They may need some limited, perhaps short-term, specific supports, but by and large housing affordability is their main obstacle to self-sufficiency and housing permanency. Programs here include ongoing housing subsidies, rent supplements, and capital programs to create new affordable housing units.

The government supports an assortment of housing programs that fall along this housing continuum. The goal is to move up the continuum from instability, with a higher need for supports and services, to self-sufficiency. To do this, we target programs and funding at key points along this continuum to assist Albertans in increasing the permanency of their housing situation. Since April 24, when the government responded to the housing task force recommendations, we are delivering increased funding for rent supplements, supports for shelters and the homeless initiative, and affordable housing.

What has been our progress to date? I'm not going to go over the government's response to the various recommendations today. I know that this committee is very familiar with that. I want to focus on what progress we've made to date and the focus of our actions for the future.

As a result of the additional funding provided in April, rent supplements have now been provided to 4,922 households in Alberta. We have a breakdown, Chair, if you're interested in what communities those go to. We know that we've assisted about 1,295 individuals in Calgary, approximately 1,800 in Edmonton, 194 in Grande Prairie, 251 in Lethbridge, 74 in Medicine Hat, 192 in Red Deer, and 264 in Fort McMurray. These are the seven major centres,

and beyond that, we've assisted 919 individuals in communities outside the seven major centres, and that is in regular rent supplements.

Direct rent supplements have assisted 1,414 Albertans. This, of course, is a program that's managed by the management body but paid directly to individuals. The first regular rent supplement is also managed by our bodies but paid directly to landlords. So that is the difference between those two respective programs.

A new program, the homeless and eviction prevention fund, has assisted 16,774 Albertans. This fund has two major focuses. The first focus is to assist Albertans with damage deposits or their first month's rent. The second focus is to assist those who might be in rental arrears. This, as you can see, has helped many Albertans. The task force recommended that this fund be at \$7 million. To date we've already spent \$14 million on this particular program this year.

Last, shelter spaces. There are 3,140 shelter spaces. Now, not all of these have been provided, of course, since April 1, but 635 new spaces have been provided in the 2006-07 year.

The task force recommended that the provincial government also enhance capital resources for the affordable housing supply, and that is what occurred. The cornerstone of the \$285 million in new funding was an allocation of block funding provided directly to municipalities to enable them to respond to their specific needs and priorities. We looked at the criteria for funding. The criteria for category 1 had to meet three tests. The first test was for a high-growth community. Test 1: was the population growth over 2.9 per cent calculated on a three-year rolling average? Test 2: was the vacancy rate in that particular municipality under the provincial average of 1.7 per cent? The third test was: was the average rental rate for a two-bedroom unit over the provincial average rate of \$620? If a municipality met all those criteria, they were considered in category 1, high-growth areas. If they met two out of the three criteria, they were in category 2. I think you can see that significant dollars have been allocated, and we will hopefully see the results of these capital funds in the near future with additional units, rental and new units, coming on board.

Consistent with the task force recommendations, by far the largest segment of our dollars went to block funding: \$143 million provided to municipalities. Municipalities are currently finalizing their agreements and forwarding them to Municipal Affairs and Housing. Sixty-eight million dollars is being provided for specific affordable housing projects, and this is through a request for proposal. The deadline for those proposals was the end of August, and we expect to announce the projects in early November.

The block funding of \$143 million was all provincial funds. The project funding of \$68 million was mainly provincial funds with some federal dollars as well. The off-reserve aboriginal housing program is federal dollars, \$16 million. The deadline for those proposals was the end of August, and we expect to announce those projects as well in November.

So what about a progress report? The overall target of our work has been to develop more than 11,000 affordable housing units over the next five years. I think it's important to note that the provincial government cannot do this on its own. Partnerships are critical, and that's why we're working with the federal government, with municipalities, with not-for-profit groups, and the private sector as we move forward with specific plans and initiatives.

As a result of the housing task force a new cross-department assistant deputy ministers' committee was established in May of this year. It is responsible for much of the work to co-ordinate the provincial government's goals in developing affordable housing plans and policies. The committee is hard at work. They have developed a land disbursement policy framework that will be

completed by the end of October with recommendations to government and a provincial inventory of lands that are potentially suitable for affordable housing. This work is directly related to task force recommendations 2 and 8. These recommendations encourage the province to release Crown land, surplus land, and school sites for affordable housing as soon as possible and to develop a single, comprehensive provincial policy on the release of these lands for affordable housing.

10:30

I'm pleased to report, as I say, that the work of the committee is almost complete. The proposed policy and complete inventory will be routed through the government review process in early November.

Secondly, we're taking a longer term look at what can be done to cut the red tape to improve efficiencies, to integrate planning and policy, and to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of Albertans in the future. That work is focusing on developing a comprehensive definition of affordable housing.

What is the definition of affordable housing? Affordable housing means different things to different people. It will look at a full continuum of different types of housing options, including shelters, transitional housing, rental units, and condominiums. We are looking at approaches that have been taken in other parts of Canada and North America. Some of you may know that Minister Danyluk visited New York and Toronto to see first-hand the successes of programs such as New York's work advantage and Toronto's streets to homes program. These are two of the approaches that we're considering in addition to the program offered in British Columbia, which is the homeless outreach, in order to develop the best approach for Alberta.

Our overall objective is to develop a strategy to improve and streamline government housing programs and services. The task force heard many things about different departments having different programs, policies, and procedures that might inhibit someone moving into the housing continuum, and this is what we're looking at. Very much consistent with that report we need to focus not only on the immediate, but we need to look at what we can do for the future and to have a solid plan in place so that we can do a better job of anticipating and responding to future housing needs across the province.

Our housing stock: past, present, and future. We have worked very hard to develop and maintain affordable housing units across the province, and this has not been the provincial government alone. The federal government, CMHC, has also been a key partner in these initiatives. Over the past years, 2002 to 2007, through capital programs we have supported the development of 4,467 new units. As of September 30, 2007, our social housing portfolio consisted of 22,219 units, and on April 24 the government announced that it was looking at 11,000 new affordable units to be developed over the next five years.

How will that goal be achieved? What do we need to do to make sure that that goal can be realized? That will be done through grant agreements and municipalities using funding to create housing units that meet their specific and local needs. Units can vary from rent supplements to new housing, with a whole range of accompanying costs. We're already getting a very good indication of the impact of the new municipal sustainability housing initiative. To date municipalities with this funding have indicated that 221 new units will be developed, consisting of new builds, purchased or renovated units, and secondary suites. In addition, 1,150 new rent supplement units will be made available by municipalities using this funding.

This to us represents a very positive start to meeting the goal of 11,000 units over the next five years. As you can see, it's not just one solution fits all. There are a variety of options, whether it be new builds, secondary suites, rent supplements, and rental accommodations.

The results again. This slide will highlight some of the key changes that have been made since the task force report. We won't pretend that the crunch on affordable housing has been removed in the six months since the task force report, but the additional dollars have certainly put us in a much stronger position to act quickly. Previously most of the capital grants for affordable housing were provided on a project-by-project basis. Now we've increased flexibility by providing more block funding, as per the housing task force report, and retained some funding for specific projects.

In the past shelters were the only option when individuals or families faced a housing crisis. Today the homeless and eviction prevention fund is there to help people who are at risk of losing their homes. As I said earlier, close to 17,000 people have already been helped as a result of this particular program. This program is very popular. As I indicated earlier, the task force thought \$7 million would be a very good start. To date, the end of September, we have spent \$14 million. So this has made a tremendous difference.

Before the government received the task force recommendations, renters faced considerable uncertainty. The government helped to address the issue by introducing new rules around rent increases and condo conversions, and the result is greater stability for renters. It's not everything the task force asked for, but it is how the government responded. There was also uncertainty around secondary suites, and we've addressed that through province-wide flexible standards in the building and fire code introduced in December of 2006.

A lot of the focus has been on expanding funding, but I have to say that dollars alone are not enough. We need to have a multipronged approach. It's critical that those dollars be converted as quickly as possible into new projects on the ground.

I want to share with you some success stories that have occurred with the partnerships. You can see some different, innovative ways that various groups have responded now and in the past to some of the dollars that the provincial government and federal government have dedicated to the housing file. The first is located in Edmonton. The Pino brothers developed a three-storey walk-up apartment. On the main floor there is commercial rental space, and the three floors above that have walk-up apartments in the inner city that are targeted to low-income single parents or couples. Rents range from \$350 a month to \$550 a month. This is, I think, a very exciting project. It was opened in late August of this year.

The second is in Calgary. The city of Calgary developed a 202-unit, 14-storey apartment tower project that's targeted to low-income singles and couples and seniors. Rents range from \$250 to \$591 a month. Based on joint funding, this project resulted in no debt financing.

In Leduc a project consisting of six fourplexes. Four of the units are barrier free. The project is administered by the Leduc Foundation. It's targeted to low- to moderate-income families and people with special needs. This complex was opened in September of 2007.

A project with 20 units is currently under way in Drumheller. It's targeted to individuals and families with or without special needs. The town's contribution included the land, fee reduction, land improvements, and on-site servicing and taxes. The Rotary Club is providing a donation, and no debt financing is required.

10:40

We wanted to share this with you because we think that these are some innovative projects. You can see that one solution is not right

for every respective community. Tackling the key housing challenges is something that we're very committed and dedicated to. These success stories will give you a picture of some of the approaches that are being taken by various communities.

We need to remember that affordable housing is a very complex and challenging problem. It's affected by a number of factors that have impacted our economy, our society, and our communities. The housing crunch affects high-growth areas the most, but housing is an issue throughout the province, and many communities are struggling to keep pace with the demands. Housing is directly tied to Alberta's economic position. If people come here to work and can't find affordable housing, it has a direct impact on our ability to compete and maintain the current status of the economy. The labour shortage is affecting all aspects of the economy from private-sector companies to the public sector, health care workers, educators, civil servants.

Alberta is not alone in facing a shortage of affordable housing. Across the country housing prices are increasing. Housing involves all three levels of government: the federal government, the provincial government, and the municipal government. To be successful in these challenges, we need to co-ordinate our actions and plans and make sure that we're on the same page and not running at cross purposes.

Finally, partnerships are critical and crucial to our success. Partnerships with municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, the service sector, the private sector can assist in building and delivering affordable housing.

Given these challenges, the provincial government is serious about the task force suggestion that Alberta must develop better planning processes now in order to stay ahead. We're in a situation today where things have moved so quickly that we're playing catch-up, but that's not the position that we want to be in in the longer term. That's why we're looking at a combination of approaches, from policies around a longer term housing framework to specific programs, regulations, and incentives. This is all under way with the assistant deputy minister's cross-ministry committee. Each strategy will be carefully analyzed so that we can put plans and actions in place that work for Alberta now and in the future.

The necessary planning, as I said, is being done by the assistant deputy minister's cross-department committee. It consists of 12 departments. This group is addressing key questions on a priority basis. How is affordable housing linked to infrastructure, economic development, and workforce needs across Alberta? What are the best tools to meet the needs and reduce barriers to affordable housing? How can the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors work together to tackle the challenges? How can communities achieve the optimum housing mix? These are critical questions. Work is under way that will help guide our actions and policies in the months to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's a very brief outline of what has been done since the task force report was received, some of the challenges we see, and the overall approach we're taking. Housing is our top priority. Our work will continue, and you can expect to see two critical steps taken in the next few months. As I mentioned, by the end of October we will have a recommendation on the new land disbursement policy framework as well as an inventory of provincial land and property suitable for affordable housing. This will certainly speed up the process and ensure that any provincially owned land that could be used for affordable housing will be released quickly. A second group is looking at efficiencies, planning, and policies. This committee is following up on the recommendations of the task force around cutting red tape and improving efficiencies, integrated planning, and policy. This committee's report is scheduled for January of 2008.

Some comments I'd like to leave you with before I get into the Municipal Government Act and that legislative framework. Affordable housing work is well under way. We've made some good progress on the task force report. The challenges are complex, and there's a lot more work that needs to be done. Partnerships will be critical as we move forward.

Finally, while much of the focus has been on the critical needs of today, we have to think longer term and what that means for putting the necessary framework, policies, plans, and legislation, if appropriate, in place to do a better job of anticipating those needs.

You mentioned earlier, Chair, that there were some legislative issues that may be discussed. A number of questions have been raised about the Municipal Government Act. Does this act inhibit the municipalities' ability to take actions in support of affordable housing? I thought I'd take just a few minutes to highlight some of the key components of the Municipal Government Act. It is a rather complex piece of legislation, but it's also enabling.

The Municipal Government Act is this enabling piece of legislation. It provides municipalities with natural person powers to act within spheres of their jurisdiction. The Municipal Government Act, which was modernized in 1994, states that a municipality can do anything a natural person can do within its spheres of jurisdiction unless it's specifically prohibited by the Municipal Government Act or any other act. It's still a relatively new concept for municipal legislation. Municipalities have been somewhat cautious in how they use these powers, and understandably so.

The first issue that we've heard a lot about is inclusionary zoning. I think we should be aware that inclusionary zoning means different things to different people. In the broadest sense inclusionary zoning means the ability to zone land for a variety of housing types to meet a variety of market demands. It appears simple, but it isn't. Alberta municipalities can adopt inclusionary zoning in this broad sense: through plans and land-use bylaws the municipality can prescribe the type of housing, the density, and the standards of development that will be permitted in a municipality. While this can influence the provision of affordable housing, it does not guarantee it. Simply put, zoning the land for a variety of housing types does not guarantee that the land will be developed, nor does it guarantee that once developed, the housing units will be affordable.

A number of people use the term "inclusionary zoning," and they want the authority to not only zone for affordable housing types, which municipalities currently have, but to require developers to either build houses at a predetermined, affordable price or to construct and lease rental housing at rent geared to income. Municipalities can request developers to enter into an agreement to voluntarily provide affordable housing in this way. The municipality could offer incentives – and I'll get into that in a moment – however, the Municipal Government Act does not give municipalities the authority to require developers to enter into such agreements.

The next issue is density bonuses. A density bonus is an incentive to a developer or a builder offering more usable floor space than would normally be permitted in the land-use area if the developer or the builder provides specific desirable features. This includes allowing building more residential units on a site than would normally be permitted if some or all of the additional units were subsidized by the builder or the developer. The Municipal Government Act allows municipalities to negotiate voluntary agreements with developers to meet this purpose.

This is another circumstance where the Municipal Government Act provisions are general in nature and do not explicitly reference density bonuses. As a result, some municipalities may be hesitant to use the existing provision of the act, either out of no experience with the act or their concern that developers may launch drawn-out

legal challenges if the incentives are not properly framed. This has been the experience in some jurisdictions outside of Alberta. Density bonuses can lead to an increase in the number of both market and affordable housing units; however, density bonuses can lead to some controversy in a municipality, particularly from builders or developers who have not had such benefits in the past.

10:50

Secondary suites. We heard a lot in the housing task force report about secondary suites, and I'd like to share with you some quick information on this front as well. In December 2006 the Alberta building code and fire code were amended to provide increased flexibility, thereby reducing the costs of building secondary suites. Prior to this amendment secondary suites had to be constructed to the same requirements as duplexes and apartments. The new standards allow for a lower cost safe way to include a secondary suite in new constructions and a cost-effective way to upgrade existing, what are commonly called, illegal suites.

The primary features of the building code provisions for new construction are the use of drywall for fire separation, the ability to use common vestibule exits rather than having a fully separate exit, which was in the past, connected fire alarms, ceiling height limitation at 6-6 versus 8 feet, and a variety of options of achieving separate heating and ventilation. The fire code provisions maintain the flexibility of the building code and make special allowances for upgrading existing suites by not requiring separate heating and ventilation. In both the building and the fire code amendments that were passed in December, while more affordable, the critical safety feature of enclosed furnace rooms and escape windows in bedrooms are maintained.

With these standards in place municipalities have now had the opportunity to pass zoning bylaws allowing for the development of secondary suites. We are constantly asked: how many new secondary suites are there in the province? We don't have an exact figure, but I can share with the group that eight major municipalities have passed zoning bylaws to allow for the development of secondary suites; that is, Red Deer, Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and St. Albert. In a quick survey we did this fall, we do know that approximately 75 secondary suites had been approved in these municipalities in the last two to three months.

Affordable housing and the Municipal Government Act continue when we look at incentives for secondary suites and other forms of affordable housing. This was raised about: what incentives should the Municipal Government Act look at, or are there any inhibiting issues there?

Municipalities currently have the authority under the Municipal Government Act to provide for grants for the development of secondary suites or other forms of affordable housing. Municipalities have the authority to establish subclasses for the assessment and taxation of residential property on any basis that they consider appropriate. This would permit setting lower tax rates, for example, for secondary suites than other types of residential property. Municipalities can also cancel, reduce, refund, or defer municipal taxes through the Municipal Government Act. This is nearly always done on an annual basis and not part of a multiyear agreement. In doing so, the municipality shifts the tax burden from the properties on which the tax was levied to other properties in the municipality.

However, the Municipal Government Act does not provide a mechanism to deal with tax breaks related to personal or corporate income. Some municipal councils may not agree to provide incentives, as they do not feel that it is equitable to do so. For example, an incentive on secondary suite property owners may be

seen as a discriminatory competitive advantage by other more conventional rental property owners, and this is what we've heard from some of the municipalities.

The last issues regarding the Municipal Government Act are the use of reserve land, as the first issue, and secondly, the property taxes on dormitories. This issue of reserve land for affordable housing has been raised in a number of different quarters. The Municipal Government Act does not have a provision allowing land designated as municipal reserve, school reserve, or municipal school reserve to be used for housing purposes. The housing task force recommendations on this matter are under review by Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing and Alberta Education, and we believe that we will make steps to address this issue in the very near future.

I also understand that there have been a number of questions regarding the taxation of student dormitories in relationship to the Municipal Government Act. The Municipal Government Act does provide municipalities with the authority to make local decisions to tax student dormitories for municipal purposes. The city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton, for example, have chosen to have municipal property taxes paid on student residences. This authority allows municipalities to collect revenues to offset the cost of providing a broad range of municipal services to these facilities.

There was a question about: why doesn't the province pay a grant to the municipalities for these taxes so that the tax burden isn't included in the rents that are charged to students? Students that are living on or off campus are entitled to the same level of municipal services in terms of services provided such as fire protection, police protection, ambulance. There's already in many quarters a belief that there is an inequity because the rent that students pay for private accommodation clearly covers municipal and school property taxes, but students living in a dormitory do not currently pay education property taxes, so that, Chair, was the rationale in looking at that particular issue.

We hope we've been able to provide and share with you some information about what we're doing. We're very committed to making progress on this very critical file, and I would be very pleased to answer any questions or defer to my very learned colleagues who are here with me today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. You were about right on time in terms of your presentation.

In looking at the questions, of course, members are always advised to be concise. What I've noticed, though, in some of these public hearings: in the answers, when we have four people on the presentation team, sometimes we get four answers to the same question. I would encourage us not to do that. If you find that the question hasn't been fully developed, you're always welcome to submit something in writing to us to further, then, develop the answer.

We're going to start with Bruce Miller and then Ray Martin.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate the presentation and the help that I and those of us who were on the task force received from members of the department, always willing to provide us statistics and helping us become experts on housing, which we weren't before.

You know, I have lots of questions about the work up to this point. I think I've expressed in the House many times my criticisms of the government in response to the task force, so I'm not going to go into that. The real issue for me is inclusionary zoning; at least, the issue of whether changes need to be made to the Municipal Government

Act. Your response to the task force surprised me because we heard from municipalities that the MGA was an impediment to proceeding with inclusionary zoning. That's why we recommended that action be taken, but your response was: the government does not accept this recommendation to revise the Municipal Government Act.

I'm not really sure what you're saying now. On page 18 of the report you recognize that the MGA does not give municipalities exclusive authority to require the actual provision of affordable housing by developers. Are you saying, then, that we should change the MGA to include those kinds of positive provisions that encourage municipalities to proceed, you know, working with developers to get affordable housing built? The impediment is there, but you're not really saying that that should be changed. I just wondered whether you could clarify that or not.

11:00

Mr. Quickfall: The issue is again the different understandings of inclusionary zoning. As was indicated before, I mean, the basic interpretation in terms of land-use districting can in our view be accommodated in the Municipal Government Act as it now stands; however, what in fact has been asked in a number of instances goes well beyond that. In addition to dealing with issues of land-use districts, you know, essentially builders or developers are being asked to transfer title of part of the land or some of the units to the municipality, with the municipality offering, sort of, a fraction of the value of the land or the units. It's our view that that is not a matter of zoning. It much more closely approximates changes to the rules relative to dedication of land to the municipality for public purposes. That is an area that would obviously be a matter of policy to decide whether or not that sort of change to the legislation would in fact be appropriate.

The Chair: Now, do you want clarification? We usually have just one question, and we keep going around.

Dr. B. Miller: Yeah. Just clarification. What I had in mind was the ability of Edmonton or Calgary to say: okay, 5 per cent or 10 per cent or 15 per cent of a developer's area is going to be for affordable housing. Is this a problem of perception, that they can do that now on the basis of the MGA? A lot of them think that they can't or that a developer will challenge them legally.

Mr. Quickfall: We need to distinguish here between what can be done on a site that is owned by a municipality and what can be done relative to private property. Obviously, if a municipality is already the owner of a site, then it can certainly arrange whatever conditions it wishes in terms of the development of the site, the sale of the site – you know, we're prepared to offer the site on the condition of – and so on.

However, when you're talking about property that the municipality does not own, then we're talking about what the provisions of the planning and development part of the MGA are in terms of the municipality ending up, sort of, with some of these units. Basically, we have the general provision the deputy minister has alluded to that a municipality, you know, can reach an agreement with the owner of the property in terms of whatever those parties wish to do unless it's literally barred by law. But in terms of requiring the owners of the property to turn over part of the property, that is limited.

Clearly, in terms of the dedication requirements – I mean, we're talking environmental reserve, which is hardly applicable here, municipal and school reserves, which, again, have historically been very limited legally as to the use; it's basically for park, playground purposes, for school authority purposes, or to act as a buffer, sort of,

to separate uses that you want some distance between. There is no provision in the dedication provisions of the MGA to require an owner of property to turn over the property to a municipality either for nothing or for a given amount.

Now, practically speaking, there has been a practice that builders and developers have been working with municipalities and have provided a limited number of units, typically in the range of 5 per cent, to the municipality for affordable housing purposes. But that is by agreement; that is not as a matter of the municipality being able to require an unwilling owner of property to provide.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Well, we can go into this in a lot more detail. There are always limits to private property. I can't set up a business in my house. I think that what they're asking is that that can be specific. Leave it with the municipalities to make that decision rather than, you know, the MGA sort of dictating. I think that they can work that out.

I want to follow up – and I think I know the answer to it – similar to that. One of the major problems that we're facing in both the major cities, that I'm aware of, is condo conversions. You know, one day it's a rental unit; the next day it's a condo. There are a lot of loopholes. But one of the things that Edmonton talked about – and I think it will be the same answer that we got for the other one – is amending legislation to allow municipalities to regulate condo conversions, and I think this is extremely important at this time. When I look at Edmonton – I know the figures better – we have 3,800 affordable housing units coming on through what the deputy minister talked about, some of the programs there, and they're good programs. But according to the city of Edmonton figures, at the end of May we had 4,100 condo conversions that were taken out of the rental units. We're always playing catch-up in this whole situation. So I expect that when I ask if they would look at amending legislation to allow municipalities to somehow regulate condo conversions, we'll get back into the private property, sort of, same argument again, but I'll throw that out as a question anyhow.

Mr. Quickfall: Although one might speculate to that effect, actually my understanding is that the Condominium Property Act does not allow for the provisions of the planning and development part of the MGA to be applied in a condominium conversion. So that does not involve any changes of the boundaries of the property that's involved, and the Condominium Property Act is not a responsibility of municipal affairs.

Mr. Martin: Fair enough.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Denis Herard, followed by Victor Doerksen.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much. A very good presentation and substantial progress in a relatively short time. I want to ask questions about the slide in your presentation on page 3 that talks about the housing continuum. If I was a person that was qualified for one of those four types, you know, prevention, shelters, transitional, and affordable – I can see that you dedicate specific funds for each one of those. But if I was a person who was actually receiving benefits in any one of those four, what kind of incentive is there to move up the continuum? You know, we are dedicating funds in all these different areas, but what would I see as a client that would encourage me to move off of this?

11:10

Mr. Wigston: I'd be pleased to answer that. I think what we're looking at now, as the deputy talked about earlier, are some different programs to assist us in helping people move forward, things like the work advantage program. As it stands today, when you look at the continuum, prevention is keeping people in their own homes, preventing them from becoming homeless and getting back to the bottom of the cycle. If you're somebody who has gone into arrears and you go through the homeless and prevention eviction fund and you get some money to keep you in your own home, we would hope that the incentive would be that you won't fall back out again because you may end up on the street.

If you're somebody already in a shelter, we're looking at programs of moving people into a work advantage program, moving people into a housing-first program to give them a sense of security and comfort in a unit that they have on their own. But along with that is the incentive to work. You need to be working towards a plan to get yourself more self-sufficient and not just remain on the system.

Transitional housing is the same thing. You move into transitional housing with the impact that you're going to move through the system off into affordable and eventually market housing. So we're working at building more incentives in there as we move along.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Doerksen: I want to thank you for the discussion on the inclusionary zoning because I wasn't all that familiar with what the issues were, and I think that's very, very helpful. In that whole discussion, really, the question is: do the municipalities have the tools – or what tools do they have? – to look after their own desires or needs for building what they consider affordable housing in their own units? I think you've indicated quite clearly that they have some tools with respect to public land that they own or can purchase and then decide. They can offer incentives to developers, but at first blush the notion of giving them the ability to require developers would to me seem to be a disincentive, actually, for what we're really trying to achieve in terms of development of housing. So I, for one, would not advocate us going that particular direction. That's just a comment.

Questions that I do have pertain to page 5, Municipal Funding for Housing. You said in your presentation that these were for capital projects. That was not my understanding. I thought that municipalities could use that money for a variety of programs, including rent supplements if they so chose, and not strictly capital funds. I would just like clarification on that if you could.

My last question would be: when you do look at some project funding in the past – I'm not sure if you've changed. I raised this in the House this spring, actually. I looked at the cost per unit on grants that were given – and I wish I'd brought a copy with me – and the cost per unit that was given in terms of grants varied considerably. It didn't seem to matter what marketplace you were in, whether it was Calgary or Red Deer or Leduc or somewhere; the range was anywhere from \$50,000 per unit upwards to \$300,000, \$350,000 per unit. So the question is: when you consider these projects, particularly affordable housing, what are the parameters with respect to making sure that the cost per unit doesn't get out of hand?

I'll leave those two. I'd be more than happy, on some of this, if you want to just respond back later. You might not have all the answers today.

Mr. Wigston: No. I can answer. The first question regarding the capital dollars that we put out through the MSI and capital enhance-

ment: the program is to develop and implement more affordable housing units, so it is for capital for new. It is for the purchase of existing buildings to renovate. It also includes rent supplement. As the deputy had said earlier, in Calgary there are a thousand units of rent supplement being delivered through this program. So it covers that wide range of getting more units on the market as quickly as we can.

Mr. Doerksen: It's a municipal choice.

Mr. Wigston: Yes. The municipalities are coming back to us with what their plan is of delivering the funding that we have for them.

The second question, on the cost variance. It does vary quite a bit. When you look across the province, the cost to build in some communities is quite a bit less than others. The other part of it, when you look at the actual grant amount that we put in, depends on the other partners they have coming to the table. A municipality may give land. There may be other donations from a municipality or the private sector or the nonprofit sector. Our grant amount goes down. There are other good projects that we want to support that don't have any other support, and our grant amount goes up depending on that. Each project is assessed on its own benefit, though, or its own criteria.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Can you take two more questions before we go to the questions going into the *Hansard*? Thank you very much. So we have Dave Taylor and Len Webber.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My congratulations to you for the progress that you have been making on this file. It is very, very important progress for the province and the people of Alberta, I believe. You are making some good progress. This was a worthwhile presentation, I think. It certainly informed me as to what work is going on on a daily basis behind the scenes, and I thank you for that.

I do want to come back to this issue of inclusionary zoning because if I understood the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora's questions and your responses to them correctly, I think we established here pretty clearly that the Municipal Government Act as it stands now does not give a city or a town the right to impose inclusionary zoning as a land-use policy or a land-use practice, but I think what we're really trying to get to here is the notion of what would happen if the MGA was changed to specifically empower municipalities to use inclusionary zoning, you know, with the full force of the law as expressed in the Municipal Government Act behind them.

This, as I understand it, is not a tremendously new concept. It's in operation and use in a number of other jurisdictions around North America. It seems to work certainly in some cases. What would it look like, if you could take a stab at this question, if we gave municipalities the authority, the specific, explicit authority, under the MGA, that they do not now have, to require developers to provide a set percentage of affordable housing for a set number of years? Whether those numbers were determined at the provincial level – my own preference would be to give municipalities and individual cities and towns the authority to set their own levels as they determine would work best for their unique circumstances.

Mr. Quickfall: Firstly, I would like to address what I think you intended just as a preamble. In terms of land use, you know, there are jurisdictions who are dealing with inclusionary zoning just as a matter of land use, not as a matter of dedication.

An example I would like to cite is Vancouver. Essentially, what that has in effect done is provide sites for affordable housing, in fact, but it has provided more sites than what the municipality has been able to arrange affordable housing on. The municipality has looked to various sources, notably senior-level government funding and what have you, to develop projects sort of once they had land available or portions in terms of making an arrangement with a developer. The owners of the land were in fact prepared to commit that there would be mixed use and what have you, but it was left to the municipality to arrange what in fact will be an economically viable way of actually having the affordable housing built.

As land-use and that it is used. I guess one of the implications is: what other resources can you bring to bear to make it as a package that actually delivers the units rather than makes available sites or parts of sites that will be available for affordable use?

11:20

In terms of your more general question, though, to a considerable extent we are speaking of a zero-sum game. The more that is required of the owners of the property, builders and developers and that, in terms of providing, then presumably the more affordable side will be compensated for by impacts on the market housing side. The market housing side will be more expensive. More likely there'll be less of it, and as it's more expensive, then the number of people who can afford on the market side will diminish, so companies may not go ahead with projects that they might otherwise go ahead with if the requirements were on a lower level. So you would, I would submit, convey a very important judgmental responsibility to the municipal government involved because that would have a very significant effect on how the housing market in the community in question actually operated.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Len Webber. We'll ask you to respond to this one as well.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Chair. Okay. I'll try to be quick here. I just first want to reiterate what Mr. Taylor said with regard to good progress being done in your ministry since the task force report was released.

I want to refer to page 20 of your presentation, which talks about secondary suites. I've always thought that secondary suites were a quick and fast and easy way to provide affordable housing, but you've indicated in your presentation that, yes, the Alberta building code has amended its standards, which is great, the fire codes have been amended, which is all fine and dandy, but it's the municipalities who choose whether or not to allow secondary suites in their communities. You indicated that eight large municipalities have zoning bylaws in place that allow for the development of secondary suites, but I see that in only certain areas. They certainly also have zoning bylaws in place that disallow the development of secondary suites in certain areas, and that's the problem. I live close to the university, and I've talked to a number of my neighbours and people in the community. They're more than willing to put together some type of a secondary suite on their property, but they can't because of the zoning issue.

Now, I just maybe want some clarification with regard to your comments here. Does this allow for the development of secondary suites in just new developments, or does it include existing, older developments? Just some clarification there if you don't mind.

Mr. Quickfall: Our understanding is that the situation varies, as it should, because it is municipalities that have control over land use. You know, typically municipalities weigh the views of the neigh-

bours, at least as much as housing needs and the market might say. We do know that the thrust of a couple of the bylaws is very much aimed at facilitating them in new subdivisions so that these are in place sort of before the neighbours can offer up their concerns.

The Chair: Okay. We'll move now to the questions that you will supply written answers to. We'll begin with Denis Herard, followed by Bruce Miller.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much. I've recently done a small amount of work with the Calgary apartment owners' association. As you know, when Alderman Hawkesworth was here, he indicated that the city of Calgary had come to an agreement with that association to provide a thousand low-income, affordable suites in the city of Calgary. I was trying to work with them on the problem of first and last months' rent and looking at ways for employers to get involved. When they looked into all of this, one of the things they discovered was that there are hundreds if not thousands of initiatives going on out there by various agencies. For example, Inn from the Cold has a fund that does that. When they have donations on hand, they will help people with first and last months' rent and that kind of thing. But there are hundreds of these.

The question is: from the department's perspective how do you stay on top of all of that? Is there a registry or is there a need for a registry to keep everybody informed as to who's doing what to whom? Because it just sounds to me like right now there's so much going on that nobody knows about. It just begs the question: do we really have a handle on what's happening out there?

The Chair: Bruce Miller.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes. My conscience is provoking me to ask this question. On Monday I spent some time at the Mustard Seed in Calgary, and yesterday I was at the Calgary Drop-in Centre. You know, the homeless population seems to be increasing about 15 or 17 per cent a year. I'm really grateful that the government responded to our task force by saying: okay: \$30 million per year will go towards operating costs for 25 emergency shelters throughout the province. I'd just like to know what difference that is making and where we're at. Winter is coming, and just looking at the number of homeless on the streets of Calgary – where are they going to be housed? Where are they going to find even mats on the floor? It'd be great to have a report about that. Maybe that's outside the mandate of our committee, Mr. Chairman, but I'm just really concerned about it.

The Chair: Now, I don't have any further questioners on the list.

Okay. Well, we appreciate the information that you've provided, and we'll look forward to the answers. You can do it though the clerk, please, and then we'll distribute to the members. Thank you very much.

Ms Ewart-Johnson: Thank you.

The Chair: Now, Members, new business is number 6. This was, of course, the request and the response from the city of Calgary to be able to get in on the action here. You've had that circulated. The fact that they haven't appeared before us does not provide us the opportunity to ask them any questions. Are there questions about their presentation that we would get them to respond to, or are there any comments by members or staff about the letter from the city of Calgary?

Mr. Martin: Well, I think we decided in the committee that we had limited time, that we couldn't go back and do the housing task force report again. I thought that we were going to be sort of specific to the Municipal Government Act and possible changes that might or might not be made, and that's what our discussion was. They're into a lot of broad areas that are certainly useful, but I think he alluded to sort of two specific recommendations. I don't have them in front of me. I'll have to flip through.

The Chair: Ten and 11.

Mr. Martin: Probably we should concentrate on those, you know, for the time that we have.

11:30

The Chair: Any other thoughts from any member on this agenda item? Okay. Thank you.

Then we have the written submission from the city of Calgary, that'll form part of the material. In preparation for the next meeting, now, we have the recommendations. We've heard from, of course, the Municipal Affairs folks. How should we proceed at this point? Do we want to go back through the recommendations received to date at this point, or do the members wish to study them and have that form the discussion at our next meeting? What's the pleasure?

Mr. Martin: Can I just put this in a time frame, sort of, so that we can decide where we're going? At least in theory we go back into the House on the 5th if the Premier doesn't do something.

The Chair: My schedule shows that I'm in the House from the 5th until December the whatever it is.

Mr. Martin: Right. I guess the question I would have: if we were looking at the Municipal Government Act and we wanted to make some recommendations about possible changes there or maybe the condo act too, would it be the idea that we'd want to bring it forward in this session, or is it unlikely that we can do that?

The Chair: Well, our plan is still to send a report, which we're mandated to, back to the fall sitting. I haven't given up on that.

Mr. Martin: Okay.

The Chair: It does mean that maybe we should start talking about when the date of the next meetings might be, you know, in conjunction with this point. We've been discussing up here and Corinne has been discussing with staff whether 8 to 9:30 meetings, once we're into session, are feasible. They are on our side, I do believe.

Mr. Doerksen: Morning or evening?

The Chair: Morning. You Red Deer guys are morning folks.

Mr. Martin: It doesn't work for me. We do all the planning for question period and all that during that time. I don't know about the Liberals.

The Chair: That seems to be the problem because the Liberal caucus is at 9:30, and the government caucus is at 11.

Mr. Martin: Well, the only thing – and I hate to do this as one of the House leaders. Okay, Victor, you don't have to put up with us much longer. We left Tuesday night – remember, we don't have

night sittings – and Wednesday night. I think the government is tied up Monday night, but we did leave Tuesdays and Wednesdays as a possibility for policy field committees to meet if we had to.

The Chair: Well, we can't make it a majority. We can't overrule the third party here, so we have to find an accommodation. You know, I'm not interested in this coming to any kind of a vote. We've got to find a consensus here. On a particular Tuesday morning is there any way that you could find your way around to get excused?

Mr. Martin: Well, I wish I knew what was coming up.

The Chair: Yeah. That's true.

Mr. Martin: That's the problem. We don't know on a day-by-day basis what's going to come down the tube.

The Chair: All right. What about, then, I guess we're talking about 6:30 to 8? How does that fit with staff?

Mr. Taylor: Morning or afternoon?

The Chair: Evening.

Mr. Martin: I'm not trying to be difficult. There may be a day that I could sneak out, but I just don't know.

The Chair: No, no. When we started looking at it here, we were talking about doing it from 9 to 11. Then we found out the Liberal caucus was at 9:30, so we couldn't do that. We went to 8 to 9:30, and now we find out that you can't do that.

Mr. Martin: Well, we do our phone around, and we're all there at 9 o'clock.

The Chair: All right. Okay. Then what about on a Tuesday, 6:30 to 8 o'clock?

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairman, Tuesday would not work for us. Wednesday would from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

The Chair: It doesn't work real good for us.

Mr. Herard: Well, I'm thankful that you're trying to find an accommodation, but quite frankly I think that we should probably proceed with the 8 to 9:30, given that the member that it affects has got so much experience and is so good on his feet that he probably doesn't need to go to that other meeting anyway. The fact is that there may be a time when some of us, for whatever reason, can't be present either. I don't know that we should predicate the decision on one member. So I would suggest that we proceed with the 8 to 9:30, and we'll be happy to see the hon. member here as often as he can make it.

Mr. Martin: It won't be very often.

The Chair: Still on the track of 8 to 9:30 we're actually discussing up front here, again, two Tuesdays: Tuesday, November 6, and Tuesday, November 20. I'd be glad to talk to your leader to get you excused.

Mr. Martin: I'm the House leader, though. I'm the one you're going to talk to.

The Chair: I am talking to you.

Mr. Taylor: He can sub in on 24 hours' notice.

The Chair: You could sub in, if you wanted, one of the other members. It looks like it's the only accommodation that we're going to be able to find.

There's one other thing. If you could show me a medallion that says that the world is going to treat you fairly, then I'd reconsider. Do you have such a medallion? I don't, and I've never seen one.

Mr. Martin: Yeah. Well, as I say, that's fine. But that's one of the reasons as House leaders we worked together: so we could leave, if necessary, field committees to meet in the evening. That was one of the purposes of not having night sittings.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Chairman, I can't resist the opportunity to speak to this point. I thought the reason we changed the rules in the House was actually to permit members to have more free time with their families in the evening, not to put more meetings into evenings. It doesn't apply to me because when I'm here, I'm here to work anyway, so I never liked that approach anyway.

Mr. Martin: No. But we did say that if necessary it would allow policy field committees to meet. There's a long spring session. A lot of issues could come up where you might have to meet, so it was there as a possibility. Anyhow, let's not waste any time.

The Chair: Yeah. The only way to resolve this, I think, is for us to accept that it'll be 8 to 9:30. Then you use whatever appeal powers you feel that you have to use. I don't know how else to proceed.

Mr. Martin: Well, there won't be one of us there because all of us have to be there. If I can make it, I will; if I can't – obviously, all four of us have to be there.

The Chair: Okay. Well, we need to go ahead on this.

Let me put it this way: I sense a majority opinion of November 6 and November 20 from 8 to 9:30. Am I correct in my assumption?

Mr. Martin: As long as I can say that I'm against it for the record.

The Chair: The record notes that Ray Martin is opposed. Also the record should note that Ray Martin is the third-party House leader, so he's been put into a difficult position.

All right. Now we're back to the direction to staff in preparation, now, for the next meeting.

11:40

Dr. B. Miller: Well, I think the arguments about inclusionary zoning on both sides are clearer to me than ever, but I think the missing piece for me is that I just need to learn a little more about what other provincial jurisdictions are doing about this. You know, maybe B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario. I don't know. If there is a jurisdiction which has had a really positive effect on the building of affordable housing because of their municipal government acts, where it had positive provisions to encourage that, that would be a good argument in favour of it. I don't know whether that exists. I'd like that.

The Chair: That's something that members would have, then, prior to the next meeting? Am I getting the nod?

Dr. Massolin: Yes.

Mr. Taylor: I'm going to try and extend that a little bit too and ask if Philip could, without going too deep or too broad, maybe take a look at a couple of American jurisdictions as well. I know that in the state of Massachusetts a form of inclusionary zoning is used quite extensively. I wonder if you could look into that.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Sure.

Mr. Doerksen: Well, again, if we're looking for suggestions, I wouldn't narrow it just to inclusionary zoning. I would actually want to look at all the tools the municipalities currently have and whether they are in fact using the tools they have. Before we have to entertain a notion to give them more tools, what tools do they have to use, and why aren't they using them if in fact they aren't?

The Chair: As it would relate to housing?

Mr. Doerksen: Yes.

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, if I could just, sort of, intervene on that. I mean, it's an excellent question. It might be a difficult one, however, to answer in the time allotted. You're talking about a lot of jurisdictions and a lot of potential tools, right?

Mr. Doerksen: Yeah.

The Chair: We trust you. Why don't you take a stab at it, and if you see that it's a mountain that you can't climb right now, then simply e-mail the members as soon as you know that and say: hey, we can't do that.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. That's fair enough. Thank you.

The Chair: Did I see a hand?

Mr. Martin: Two things. I think what ties into that is that the density is a part of it too because one of the things we did learn, Bruce will recall, in the task force when they were comparing the amount of people living per hectare in Calgary as compared to Toronto and Vancouver, the point was that we can't continue with urban sprawl. It seems to be the same if you look where they talk about density, that it's not specific in the rest of it. I'd like some clarification about that at the same time and see if other jurisdictions deal with that.

The other one I raised – and it's outside the Municipal Government Act, but it has a big impact – is the condo conversions and the condominium act, whether we should be looking at that too.

Mr. Massolin: Okay.

The Chair: I think that on the condominium act we're going to have to. I mean, our goal that we set out for ourselves: what sort of legislative impediments were there? I think most of us were focused on the MGA when we said that, but pretty clearly we had in evidence here that there was another act that was involved, so we need to do that.

Any other comments?

Just for the sake of the members, then, to let you in on a conversation I had with Philip, what I'm interested in seeing as well are the recommendations from the stakeholders, what was new over and above what was heard, really, from the task force because, again, I recall a discussion in the early part of our formation that we weren't here to redo the task force. So, Philip, if you would do that. Now,

you might find there is nothing new, or you might find there's a whole bunch. But I think that before we start moving into discussions of any kinds of thoughts that we want in our report, we should know if we're looking at new or looking at recycled information.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Will do.

The Chair: Okay. Anything further?

Mr. Herard: When do we get a list of legislation that's coming up in this particular sitting? I'm just asking the question because I did note that the deputy minister indicated that on some of these legislative matters that we've been talking about, there is some work being done without her actually saying, you know: there is something coming. I guess what I'm doing is I'm just suggesting that if something were to be on the Order Paper with respect to the Municipal Government Act, then what role would this committee have in bringing forward amendments or whatever to that particular act?

The Chair: Well, Shannon, you'd have access to that information sooner or later, would you not?

Ms Dean: Not necessarily, Mr. Chairman. The only way I would know is if it's placed on notice on the Order Paper.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Martin: Usually what happened in the past is the House leaders get together, and Dave Hancock would give us an update about a week or two again. But there has been no sign of a meeting at this point.

The Chair: Well, let's just watch for that. As chair I can see what I can find out. But, again, that will be information that I'll feed, then, to Philip so that he has that part of that advice document to us at the next meeting. Okay. All right. And if I don't respond to you, Philip, it means I don't know anything.

Dr. Massolin: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. All right. Not seeing any other hands, a motion for adjournment. Ray Martin. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 11:46 a.m.]