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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 3, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PRIVATE BILLS**

Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). What is the will of the House?

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Okay. Any speakers? Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act

Mr. Speaker: Second reading, private Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act; Loi sur la Fondation dénommée, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Fort Garry, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be introducing The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act for the second reading. I look forward to the committee hearings in which we will consider the bill in detail on a clause-by-clause basis. The Jewish Foundation was enacted in 1964 with support of 119 cosigners. The foundation's assets have grown in the last 40 years to approximately \$46 million. These funds are distributed in nine different endowments and in managed funds.

The funds are established by donors who come from all walks of lives. All the funds held at the Jewish Foundation are pooled and invested. A percentage of the income earned is distributed as grants to support community projects. In total the foundation has distributed \$20 million of earned income.

In 2003 it approved grants based upon community need in the Jewish and general communities. Areas that received financial support included arts, culture, heritage, Jewish organizations, human and social services, education, health and environment. One hundred and thirty organizations benefited from the \$2 million that was distributed.

The Jewish Foundation is seeking to replace its existing act with new legislation in Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation Act of Manitoba. These changes will modernize the act, will simplify the language. The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act updates investment powers, empowers the Jewish Foundation to retain appropriate professional expertise, and clarifies its ability to manage funds entrusted to the foundation. The legislation will provide the Jewish Foundation the capacity to manage its funds in a means to best capitalize on its investments.

Bill 301 will ensure that the Jewish Foundation will continue their philanthropy efforts in our province. Overall, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about modernizing the Jewish Foundation. The

Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act will ensure that efficiency will be adopted to best manage the endowment funds.

I encourage members on both sides of the House to show their commitment to the Jewish Foundation donors and recipients by supporting this bill.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am pleased to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act. Certainly this is basically modernizing the corporate governance, I believe, of The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Incorporation Act. I am certainly very supportive of that.

I am certainly pleased to be able to move this on to the committee phase on behalf of my constituents in Tuxedo. I know a number of them want to see this move forward. At this point I would just like to say thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity and will move that on. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I do want to echo my support for Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act. As my colleague from Tuxedo and the member opposite have said, it is an important step forward for a very important organization that provides very valuable service and contribution to this community. This bill will certainly increase their ability to continue the good work that they have performed in this community throughout the years. We wish them as much success in their future endeavours as they have had in the past. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to indicate that the Liberal Party supports this legislation. We want to acknowledge and pay tribute to the major efforts that the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba has made in contributing to the quality of life in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. We certainly support the changes in this bill to better enable the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba to continue to make contributions and to benefit people in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on second reading of Bill 200, The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. *[Agreed]*

Bill 201—The Taxpayer Protection Legal Representation Act (Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 201, The Taxpayer Protection Legal Representation Act (Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? *[Agreed]*

It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), who has six minutes remaining. Stand? *[Agreed]*

Bill 206—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 206, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick). What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? *[Agreed]*

It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), who has one minute remaining.

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? *[Agreed]*

Bill 212—The Pension Freedom Act (Pension Benefits Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act (Pension Benefits Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Transcona?

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It is my pleasure to rise to add my comments to Bill 212, Mr. Speaker. We listened to the comments of the honourable members opposite and, in fact, some of the questions in Question Period that have occurred here with respect to the provisions of this particular bill throughout this session. We are quite intrigued with some of the comments of the individual members opposite when they talked about wanting to open up pension plan provisions and giving access to the funds, and I have a number of comments with respect to what that will mean to individuals.

* (10:10)

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, as the member of the Legislative Assembly for my community, to talk with many folks in my community. I know members of this Chamber have had the opportunity to receive correspondence from various members of our communities, either in written or in verbal form, expressing viewpoints on one side or the other, or what should happen with pension plans. I know in discussions with members of my community, in fact, just this week, when I was at a funeral of a local Transcona resident, I was approached by members of the public who were at that particular event talking to me about pension plans and what it would mean to them with the unlocking as proposed by members opposite through this particular piece of legislation.

I think it is timely too, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that just this weekend coming on June 6, we will be

commemorating the 60-year anniversary of D-day and the sacrifice that the men and women of this country, in fact all of the Allied forces, made on behalf of the people of our communities in this great country in which we live and, of course, of the countries that we were trying to liberate at that time, and of the values that those men and women fought for trying to preserve the democracy in which we live and, also, the things that we value so highly whether it be education or health care or pension plans. Those are some of the key elements of our society that make this a great and wonderful land in which we live. I know I will be attending some of those events in my community this weekend, and I am sure other members of this Chamber will as well.

Mr. Speaker, pensions are important to many Manitobans, in fact, to all Canadians. There were a lot of folks in our community over the years, over the decades, who fought very long and hard to establish pension plans in our province, and to provide some source of income after the working years, the working career has completed, and the individuals wanted to be able to sustain themselves financially in their remaining years of their life. In that case, pension plans were established.

Now there are a number of pension plans that are, in fact, in effect. We have the defined benefit pension plans that are available to members through The Pension Benefits Act. We have the defined contribution plans. We have RRSPs which are ultimately converted into LIRAs and LIFs as various vehicles associated with pension plans. Of course, those affect individual members in different ways as we attempt to take some of the earnings that we have through our working careers and put them aside for our retirement years to provide for us and our spouses and for any of those needs in our retirement years. So we think pension plans have played a crucial role in living in some form of dignity through our retirement years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I looked very carefully at the issues that have been raised by members of my community with respect to this particular bill, 212, and I know there are members of my community who want to have some flexibility with respect to their pension earnings and what happens with their pension plans. Unfortunately, this bill will not provide the protections that are so crucial to the financial security and future for individuals who will rely on those pension funds to sustain them in their retirement years. I will go on to address some of the

issues with respect to how they will not be able to sustain individuals and some of the weaknesses of this particular bill.

In Manitoba there are some 180 000 Manitobans who are currently participating in pension plans that are regulated by The Pension Benefits Act of Manitoba. That is a very large component of our population who rely on those pension plans. Under the provisions, members of the public want the opportunity to have the flexibility, but in this bill it does not provide for the spousal protection that will be required to protect a surviving spouse should the planholder die and then of course the provisions of this particular bill, 212, would not protect that spouse with respect to continuation of pension benefits.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, this bill will not allow any creditor protection, which I think is a crucial part of this bill, is one of the glaring weaknesses of this bill in that it will not allow for the continuation of creditor protection. That, I think, is unfortunate.

I know the members opposite say, "Well, let us mirror the province of Saskatchewan and what they are trying to do" in the Saskatchewan experiment, we like to call it. My understanding is the province of Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada that has gone forward with some flexibility in their pension plan.

I agree, Mr. Speaker, in talking with my constituents there needs to be some flexibility with respect to access of those funds, and I will give you a hypothetical situation.

Mr. Speaker, if an individual pension planholder should unfortunately encounter a life-threatening illness or disease—and I understand that there needs to be some flexibility taking into consideration spousal protection—there might be a need to have some access to those funds in a reasonable and balanced manner to take into account what funds would be required for the continuation of spousal benefits, but at the same time allow for some flexibility and access to those funds should they be in excess of the needs to sustain those individuals.

So I understand if you look at the overall amount of the funds that are in the plan, it might be advisable to allow some flexibility and access to those funds.

Now I listen to members opposite say, "Well, perhaps you need to open up the plan totally and let members access to buy"—I think they said—"a cabin or a new vehicle." Now I know—*[interjection]* I think it was the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) that had originally said that, Mr. Speaker.

I am not sure that buying a cottage or a new car with your pension funds is—what do I know, perhaps not the best investment to be making with your pension funds. I am not sure how that is going to sustain you into your retirement years, but if that is the choice of the members opposite, I will have to let them explain their comments. *[interjection]*

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite from Portage la Prairie is now saying, "How should we be in a position of wanting to regulate the pensions to make sure that there is some protection out there for an individual?"

In discussion with members of my community this past week, I was quite intrigued when individuals were coming up to me and saying, "You know, I do not want full access to all of the money so I can take all of that money out of that pension plan and collapse it totally," because that is what the members opposite are proposing.

Under the legislation that they have here today, it will allow a wide-open access to the money at any age. At 35 years of age or less, you want to give an individual access to their pension funds to collapse the fund. I do not know how that is going to protect an individual into their retirement years and provide for sustained financial income through their retirement years, which I think is irresponsible on the part of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I agree there needs to be some flexibility and I have said this to my constituents that have talked to me about this. I know our government has said this publicly here in this House, that there needs to be some flexibility with respect to access to pension funds, and there needs to be some consideration of exceptional circumstances that need to be taken into consideration to allow for that access to occur.

But I guess the question here is where does that balance occur to allow the excess funds to be accessed to make sure that there is also the ability to sustain the plan beneficiaries to their last days on this

Earth. So I think there needs to be a balance there, and I think this legislation does not provide for that balance.

Now, with respect to the Saskatchewan plan, it is my understanding that the Saskatchewan plan requires that age 55 must be attained, unless the plan permits retirement earlier. You cannot access those plans until age 55. Now, in my understanding, in this Bill 212, you can access the funds of the plan, collapse the fund totally in fact, at a much earlier age, in fact any age.

I think that is irresponsible. I wish the member opposite had thought through this bill very carefully before he brought it to this House, but it is quite clear that did not occur.

One of the crucial parts, and I said a few moments ago, the crucial parts of this bill that are missing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (10:20)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reid: Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said a few minutes ago, one of the crucial parts of this bill that is also missing is the creditor protection. I know that the members opposite like to talk about how people are affected by bankruptcy or personal difficult financial circumstances.

I mean, there are a variety of circumstances that can occur in an individual's life that can affect them financially, but to allow a bank or other financial institution to come and attach to the pension funds that are there to sustain an individual until the day they die, I think is totally irresponsible.

I think that is what happens in this bill that is being proposed by the members opposite. To allow that particular financial institution to come in and attach and to lay claim against those remaining funds, I think, will do grievous harm to the individuals for which the plan was originally established, in fact, will allow for those individuals then to become wards of the provincial government, something I think members opposite, I would expect, would be opposed to.

But it is my understanding that the opening of the creditor protection, or where it does not provide creditor-proof status in this legislation, this Bill 212, will not allow for the protection of the individuals.

The member opposite, I am sure if he had taken the time to look very seriously at what happens to these two particular provisions, it might have been more palatable or more acceptable to this side of the House if it had provided for that. Now we have committed as a provincial government to looking very closely at the flexibility of the pension funds that are in there, and making sure that there is a balance between sustainability of future retirement earnings and access to those funds.

This government took the steps, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this legislation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members that wish to get into this debate will have the opportunity. Every member in this House has the right to debate each and every bill that comes forward. So if members will just be patient, they will have their turn. Right now, the honourable Member for Transcona has the floor.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, yes, indeed, members opposite will have a chance to add their comments and perhaps explain why there are such glaring weaknesses in this piece of legislation that they have posed. Or, do you not care about the spouses of the planned beneficiaries? Is that what you are saying? You do not care about the spouses' continued source of financial income until the day they die, as well?

Should my wife, in this particular case, or the spouses of each and every one of us and the Manitobans that are involved not have that protection in the legislation, Mr. Speaker? I think that is a glaring weakness in this bill and that pension plans promised an income for life, that is the crucial component that the members opposite seem to forget.

You think that you should be able to take your money out of the pension plan and to spend that money now without having some balance, and you say that they should not have the access to government protection and that they should have full

access to those funds. So there is no balance in the position that you have taken with respect to the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

I see that my time is running short here with respect to this particular bill, and I understand our government commissioned the Pension Commission study that went around the province of Manitoba to consult with Manitobans about this particular piece of legislation. The period of comment is now closed.

We are considering all of the comments that we have received from the public, in addition to the report received from the Pension Commission. We will be balancing out those comments and those viewpoints, and I believe our government will be proceeding with a piece of legislation that will provide that balance for Manitobans, protecting those pension funds into the future to make sure that planned beneficiaries, both the original contributor, and the spouse are protected into their retirement years to make sure that they have the standard of living that we all want them to have. But this bill does not provide that creditor protection or that spousal protection. There are two glaring weaknesses. Therefore I cannot support this bill in principle. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I would like to make a few comments regarding Bill 212. I did listen intently to the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) regarding his comments.

I, too, want to make it clear with the 60th anniversary of Premier Roblin going to Normandy representing the Province and definitely with the honour that has been bestowed upon him, to not only represent the province of Manitoba, but also all Manitobans. We indeed on this side of the House want to make sure we do remember those people that went and fought so graciously for our freedoms to be able to debate bills like this before the House, Mr. Speaker.

I did bring Bill 211 forward honouring the veterans by their licence plate. I want to commend the minister for highways and transportation for agreeing that this is an important bill. He is prepared to move the legislation forward through regulation and recognize the veterans. Not only did this bill that I brought forward bring attention to veterans within the province of Manitoba, but also now B.C. has also agreed to bring the same legislation forward and

regulations in that province as well through the initiative that was brought forward by this side of the House.

In regard to Bill 212, as I talked about with the honour that has been bestowed upon us for the privilege to speak on these bills, the member from Transcona talked about spousal protection and also creditor protection. This amendment that has been presented by the honourable member from this side of the House, I would like to make sure that the member from Transcona realizes this is covered under the act. This is already there. We do not want to mislead the people. We are not changing the act. We are amending the act. That is still there. It is important to be noted that we do not mislead the people.

The thing that is most important about this bill to be moved forward to committee stage is we can get feedback. I too have talked to my constituents. I am getting the same type of comments that the people on this side are getting. I do not know where they get their information. We all put our pants on one leg at a time. I think it is important that we have this discussion, this debate, and move it to committee so we can get input from those people as they move forward. Without it going to committee, if this government does not let it move forward, then shame on them. That is where we need to move and move it quickly.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about, that is within the amendments of Bill 212, those people who have a right to their own pension plan should have access to it. That is what this amendment will do, just like our MLAs, exactly. The member from Transcona can take his money out. I can take my money out. That is the issue. We want to be able to do what we feel is right with our own money. We have paid into this fund as individuals. Our seniors have paid into it. They need the quality of life as they feel they want to have it.

I am very fortunate to have both my parents on both sides of my family still alive. You know what, once in a while something will come up where they need that extra money, and, by golly, I would like to make sure they can have their pension funds. They were farmers. They were not blessed. Their pension plan was farming income. They invested it wisely and they have a pretty good quality of life, but under this legislation I am glad that they are not tied to

where the government has put them in this position. This Bill 212 will give them the opportunity, and the people in the city. This is a big issue. No only the people in the city, people in Brandon, other parts of the province where even those in rural Manitoba that have made an opportunity to have those pension plans need to have access to them. I would ask that the government assist us in moving this bill on to committee and move it as quickly as possible.

With that, we would like to move it on today. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): I stand in opposition to The Pension Freedom Act. First, I would just like to make a comment in regard to the comment that was made by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler). Some of us do not put our pants on one leg at a time. Some of us put our skirts on. Having said that, it actually is the basis for a lot of my comments in regard to this legislation that is before the House.

* (10:30)

I would first like to preface my comments around the fact that research shows that, through the benefits of medicine and the commitment individuals have made to healthy living, people are living longer and healthier lives. In my visits to the constituency and to seniors' residences, I have found that the number of women who live a long life is very high. We find many, many women who are in seniors' residences. In the paper just recently, we saw that a woman lived to the grand and honourable age of 114. Buying a car with your pension plan would not provide these individuals with the dignity or with the financial resources to be able to live an honourable and dignified life.

The proposals that are here before the House do not provide for financial security for women who are spouses, often, and do not have their own pension plan. The concept of a pension plan is to provide security and financial support for people, to allow them to live in a manner that gives them the finances to provide for their own health, to provide for their grandchildren if they so wish. It is not there to be taken out and to be spent, thereby ensuring that there is not money for the future.

That is why I stand to speak in opposition to this bill before the House, and I would like to ask the

members to consider what they are putting forward before us. It is not an adequate way to protect our most vulnerable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It is my privilege to put some words in regard to Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, in regard to pensions in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, I have just heard some actual fearmongering from the government in power today in regard to some dishonest comments, basically, that they have put on the record in regard to this bill. I want to clarify that this government really wants to have their cake, but they want somebody else to eat it.

This is a situation where tactics are talked about in regard to spousal protection and creditor protection by the member from Transcona, that he has indicated that this bill will damage those particular individuals. I just heard the latest member speaking to the same issues on this bill. You know, Mr. Speaker, this bill does nothing to amend the pensions; it does nothing to change The Pension Freedom Act. It clearly is amending one portion of it to allow individuals the ability to have a greater say in their own pension funds.

Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the members in the government today have the ability to look after their own pensions when we leave this House. They have the same kind of defined contribution pension plan that is being talked about in this bill. I find that this bill really is just wanting to allow for the replacement of pension benefit with RSPs or RRIFs that are not locked in, or a life income fund that a person could use.

There is another clause that allows, in accordance with a regulation and upon application to the administrator, an individual that replaced the pension benefit with a life income fund to withdraw all or any part of the amount standing to their credit. Of course, the third and final clause gives the option to access their pension funds to seniors that are already over 65 and drawing their pension benefits.

Mr. Speaker, we hear all kinds of fearmongering from the government to say that they know that if we actually give these people their own pensions back, they will blow it, that they are not responsible. We have heard those words from the government

members that seniors are not responsible, that they are at risk, that they are our most vulnerable, I think were the words of the last member to speak on this bill. My goodness, Mr. Speaker, if we cannot allow that seniors would have the same right as us as individuals in this House to manage their own retirement funds, then what kind of trust can we place in the citizens of Manitoba?

At the same time, I want to clarify again that this amendment does not take spousal protection away from any citizen of Manitoba, any senior citizen who would withdraw their pension funds. It certainly leaves creditor protection in place in regard to the vulnerability of individuals who might take their funds out.

Of course, we would not want, no one would want to see a senior lose their pension funds in regard to taking them out. But, Mr. Speaker, there are circumstances where individuals need these funds, where they may want to purchase something for their family. Most of the time it is not even for themselves, it is to try and help out family members, providing they have a comfortable enough living themselves.

As we have seen many times, I think it is a well-known fact that most of those incomes are needed when seniors are between the ages of 60 and 75. We are seeing a greater number of people retired at age 55 now. It is not uncommon. There are still many active years in the citizen's life in those areas up to, as indicated, many people well over in their hundreds now, well over the age of 100. But the most active years, of course, are up to the age of 75. While many, many citizens in this province are still very, very active long past the age of 75, it is a well-known fact that their income needs do lower somewhat after that particular age.

To say that seniors will not have the ability to manage these funds that the members of this House have is just wrong. Most people in their senior years could use some small portion of these funds. No one is indicating that they would have to withdraw the whole amount of it. There are times when I am sure that they would be able to do the same thing as we can. Unless the government is planning on taking away the ability to have financial planners in this province in a bill that has not come before this House yet, then I am sure that most of these seniors already have a financial planner that can well direct them

into a much better process of income earning than what they may presently have by leaving these funds in the package that they want access to.

With that I just wanted to say that there are a lot of people affected by this particular kind of reform in the province of Manitoba. There are about 114 000, about 70 percent of our Manitobans, that are presently in the defined benefit plans under which a person is determined by years of service and salary. There are about 36 000 in defined contribution pension plans. There are about another 12 000, roughly 8 percent of those in the pension process, in some kind of a hybrid or combination form of these direct contribution and direct benefit plans. So you can see that there are close to 150 000 or 160 000 people in Manitoba impacted by this particular process.

This government is indicating that they know better how to spend these funds. It is a very paternalistic attitude of this government. I find it irresponsible. But this "we know how to spend your money better than you do" is not uncommon in the New Democratic Party. They have tried to do it in many bills that they have brought forward. I think a prime indication of where this government is going is just exactly what their federal leader has announced for his economic plan, the tax plan, in the last week. That is not a tax plan, that is a lead anchor around somebody's ankles in the middle of the ocean to bring down.

Well, you know, it has been pointed out, as I pointed out the other day, they have got a leader by the name of Jack, and he is a tonne light in just about every issue that has been going on out there these days. I told the Premier (Mr. Doer) that the other day, but here he was standing up the other night in Winnipeg with his arm around this federal leader, arm in arm. Well, this federal leader, his idea of tax planning is to tax inheritances. It is to cut the contributions, cut the capital tax or cut the small business tax cap back from \$300,000 to \$200,000. I am assuming that this government does not agree with that because, of course, we are moving the other way. All provinces in Canada are moving the other way, trying to give small businesses a bigger break in Canada. But I am not so sure that this government's hidden agenda is not to really tax business more than what they already are.

* (10:40)

You know, Mr. Speaker, poor Mr. Layton is in a dilemma. He is not even picking up enough support to keep his own seat hardly, and as we move along in this election, I am sure that they will find him coming back to fight Dennis Mills before this thing is over in his own home town.

But anyway, there is a great consternation on my behalf, Mr. Speaker that this government should actually allow this bill to move to committee. I would be very, very disappointed on behalf of seniors in this province. I have had thousands of petitions across my own constituency, never mind across Manitoba, that have come forward to me on behalf of citizens who want the opportunity to take these funds out. We know that there are credit unions and co-operatives across this province that are looking at having greater access to their pension benefits in this province. We are in a situation where this government is actually forcing them to go someplace else to get access to their funds and there is a process that they can do that with in those organizations.

You know, at a time when the credit unions are really doing a bang-up job, particularly in a lot of the rural areas of Manitoba, people are coming together in that co-operative manner to work in regard to developing new businesses and that sort of thing in their local communities, along with private citizens who still are working independently to develop a lot of businesses.

I have seen a couple of those on the weekend, Mr. Speaker. I just have to say that I was at the opening of the Canadian Wilderness Inn in Boissevain, which is a fine hotel built by completely independent funds along No. 10 highway. Boissevain and the Peace Garden area are completely moving into a tourist destination area, a very fine tourist destination on a major thoroughfare that we have in this province, a major trade route, No. 10 highway, with a major border crossing at the Boissevain and Dunsheath crossings.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of trade that goes back and forth there every day and it impacts all of our seniors in this province. They need access to those goods and a lot of these people are indicating that they want to have the right to be able to have greater access to their own pension funds in the province of Manitoba. Clearly this amendment that has been brought forward by the member from Springfield,

our Labour and Immigration critic, Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act amendments, would clearly provide those senior citizens with access to their funds that they would be able to move forward with, and I just feel strongly that they should have the right to do that.

It has been quoted, I guess, in some of the papers, or actually in one of the public hearings held in January in 2003 on bills such as this, that the restrictions seem to assume that seniors lose all sense when they retire. That is just completely mind-boggling that those kinds of comments would come from the government. Allowing pension holders access to their funds is no different than what is currently allowed under the registered retirement savings plans that are out there today. These people should have that access.

I was referring earlier that people can go out of the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Nowhere would that be any easier than the member from Flin Flon when he lives so close to Creighton there. The people in those credit unions could just go across to the other side of the border. I am faced with the same thing. We want our citizens to stay in Manitoba, in Virden and Elkhorn and Melita and Boissevain and Pierson and along that border. There is a fantastic co-operative in the Pierson area and the Boissevain area and a number of those.

The people that have the most to gain and those are the managers of those co-operatives, they make the highest salaries, never mind the ordinary tellers and the people who work in those businesses that are on the lower side of the pay scale. They may not have the affluence to be able to just up and move to another province just to get their pension funds. But some are indicating to me that they certainly will because all they have to do, I believe, it is six months, to go to Saskatchewan, get access to their pension funds that were solely raised here in Manitoba.

Well, Saskatchewan, you know, I used to travel across that province when I was a farm leader and I have been in just about every corner of it, and I will tell you there are some beautiful lakes and cottage areas and wonderful places in that province to retire to as well. We do not want to lose some of our major income earners in this province to another province, simply because this government cannot see past the end of their noses in relation to giving people a little

bit more access to some of their retirement funds in this province.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, if they take those funds, if they have to move to Saskatchewan to get full access to their funds, which they can do in a few months if they live in that province for a short time and work in that province in their co-operative movement, they are over there with open arms ready to accept Manitobans. And why would they not move? They are paying lower taxes than they are here anyway, that province gets the benefit of all that tax. It gets the benefit of all the consumer dollars that go over there and those people probably stay there. They will probably stay living there, as they will go there and buy a home. That is my point. That is an absolute shame.

We worry about our children leaving the province and trying to do everything we can to bring them back into this province. Here we are worrying about our seniors now having to leave the province to get access to their pension funds. I have had hundreds, if not thousands of petitions. I indicated thousands earlier and that there have been thousands of petitions come my way in regards to having greater access to their pension funds.

I just want it recorded that I am very much in favour of this bill moving forward. I would urge the government to allow this bill to go to committee so that these people can come and make their point here in Manitoba about staying in Manitoba, and just exactly how they would be able to have a little bit more freedom when they are dealing with their own pension funds in Manitoba. Thank you, I urge the bill to be moved to committee.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it was in 1926 that the Ginger Group in Parliament forced on the government of the day, the Liberal government, a pension plan for seniors in Canada. One of those members of the Ginger Group was J.S. Woodsworth, the member for Winnipeg North Centre from Winnipeg, and it was in return for support on a confidence motion that the Ginger Group forced the pension plan on the Liberal government of that day.

After that, J. S. Woodsworth until 1942, and after 1942, Stanley Knowles campaigned to improve the pension because, originally, I believe, it was at age 70. They campaigned to have it lowered.

Originally it was not indexed, and they campaigned to have it indexed, campaigned and spoke in favour of improvements for many, many decades. So we, in our party, have a proud history of support for pensions.

In fact, the most important part of pensions is the pension promise, and that is that people should have an income for life, a retirement income for life. If you were to contrast pensions with RSPs, I think it would be very instructive. For example, only about 30 percent of Canadians can afford to contribute to RSPs, and every year, many low-income people withdraw money from RSPs, either for emergencies or for holidays or whatever, but usually it is low-income people.

High-income people keep their money there as a tax shelter, or a deferral of tax, until they retire. But giving people that kind of flexibility means that when people have emergencies, they take the money out and then it is not there for their retirement, which is not a good thing.

If you were to apply for social assistance and you are a single employable person, you have to spend all of your capital assets down to zero. So, for example, you could have \$100,000 in RSPs. If you apply for social assistance, you have to withdraw all your RSPs and spend it all before you qualify for social assistance in Manitoba, and probably every province in Canada. So you do not want flexibility in terms of disposable assets in case you ever have to apply for social assistance. That is not a helpful thing to do. You need to keep the money there for your retirement.

Now this government is committed to pension reform that includes more flexibility in accessing pension benefits on retirement. That is why we launched the review of The Pension Benefits Act. We will be bringing in changes later this year. As part of this review, Manitoba's Pension Commission posted its recommendations on the Internet for Manitobans to consider and review. Manitobans were invited to submit their views. That period of public input wrapped up at the end of March.

In addition to reviewing that input, we are looking forward to recommendations from other jurisdictions and from the Canadian Association of Pension Supervisory Authorities. This organization has struck a committee to specifically review the unlocking issue.

Recommendations are expected later this year. Alberta has also recently completed a period of public consultation on this issue. Saskatchewan is the only province to adopt unlocking provisions such as those advocated by the opposition. All provinces are watching the Saskatchewan experiment very carefully, but like Manitoba, most provinces are moving cautiously on this issue, as it has huge implications for the 180 000 Manitobans currently participating in pension plans regulated under The Pension Benefits Act. We have a responsibility to review all of this input and experience carefully before making any changes.

* (10:50)

Mr. Speaker, the current review of The Pension Benefits Act is the first in 20 years. The previous Tory government had a decade to deal with this issue. They did not. When the previous government did make changes to The Pension Benefits Act, they did not engage in the kind of open consultation that we are now doing. Our commitment has been demonstrated with real change.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In addition to the current review, we have also shown our commitment to more flexibility with real changes to the locking-in provisions. Effective January 1, 2003, we changed pension rules so that Manitobans can access more of their benefits at the front end before age 65 to ensure more stable retirement income even before their OAS and CPP benefits kick in. With this change we almost doubled the amount a typical 58-year-old can access each year from a locked-in retirement income fund from \$9,000 to \$17,000. Our increases also increased the amount a typical 58-year-old can access from a life income fund from \$10,350 to \$19,000.

These changes speak directly to the issues that are at the heart of the unlocking debate. They add flexibility to those who need bridging support before their seniors benefits kick in. Flexibility needs to be balanced against the pension promise.

While we are committed to providing more flexibility for Manitobans in assessing their pension benefits, we have a responsibility to balance the desire for more flexibility against our responsibility to honour the pension promise, the promise of a lifetime income for retirees and their spouses.

That is basically the pension promise, the promise of an income for life. This has been a pillar of pension plans in legislation in Canada for decades. The pension promise is a principle which is becoming even more important as people live longer and longer; 180 000 Manitobans participate in pension plans regulated under The Pension Benefits Act. We have a responsibility to these people to proceed very carefully with any changes that affect the pension promise to them.

It is this concern that was raised by the Multi-Employer Benefit Plan Council of Canada. This organization opposes the kind of aggressive unlocking provisions proposed in this bill. In its submission to the Pension Commission, the Multi-Employer Benefit Plan Council of Canada wrote, and I quote: "The commission's report suggests that premature access such as for reasons of financial hardship is not recommended. The Multi-Employer Benefit Plan Council of Canada supports this recommendation in that it meets the primary purpose of all pension plans, to provide beneficiaries with lifetime retirement benefits."

This was a submission to the Pension Commission in March 2004.

We believe that we need to listen to all sides on this issue. The risk to Manitobans was even acknowledged this week by Charles Cruden of the Manitoba Society of Seniors. He acknowledged in the *Free Press* that the opposition bill could put the retirement income of up to 10 percent of Manitoba pensioners at risk. That is 18 000 Manitobans. We have a responsibility to those 18 000 Manitobans to ensure they have a decent retirement income. I think when the Manitoba Society of Seniors speaks we should listen to them, because they speak for a lot of Manitobans. Usually they have very credible people on their subcommittees. I remember the late Murray Smith did a lot of work on pension issues for the Manitoba Society of Seniors. We always appreciated their briefs and their submissions to government, because they were always very reasonable and well thought out. If the Manitoba Society of Seniors is saying this, or one of their members, then I think we should pay attention.

It is this risk that led Manitoba's Pension Commission to recommend against the kind of aggressive unlocking provisions proposed in this bill. While we are committed to providing more

flexibility, it is our responsibility to consider the Pension Commission's advice very seriously.

The Pension Commission is an independent advisory body with representatives from retirees, employers, unions and pension administrators. We also need to take seriously the advice of both the Multi-Employer Benefit Plan Council of Canada and Manulife Financial, both of which have voiced their opposition to aggressive unlocking of pension benefits.

In its submission to the Pension Commission, Manulife Financial wrote, and I quote: "The proposal to lock in all pension benefits is well supported, as it maintains the purpose for providing pension plans."

This was a submission to the Pension Commission in March 2004.

Finally, we need to give serious consideration to the concerns of those seniors who oppose wide-open unlocking of pension benefits. Just this week the government received a letter from the Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees. They told us they oppose Bill 212. They said it is too shallow and narrow to deserve their support, and I hope the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) is listening.

In closing, we urge the opposition to take a step back and reconsider its simplistic approach to this issue. We need to work through all of the complex issues raised by this bill in detail to ensure that increased flexibility for seniors is balanced against a dependable retirement income.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We would encourage the opposition to keep in mind the reasons why locking-in provisions were established in the first place. We need to make sure these important principles are not lost as we bring more flexibility to pension rules.

These reasons were nicely summarized by the Alberta government, a government, I would point out, that the opposition usually listens to—in fact, usually they want us to adopt all their policies—a government the opposition is fond of. In its discussion paper on this issue last fall, the government of Alberta said, "Locked-in funds provide protection for pension partners by requiring that they receive survivor benefits. Locked-in funds

are protected from creditors. Locking-in provides that people will have some pension income in retirement even if they live a long time."

This was mentioned by previous speakers, that we are an ageing society, that more and more people are living longer and longer. I believe, if you make it to 65, on average people live to 85, and that is increasing every year. We have more and more people who are seniors. So we need to be concerned about people having retirement income for the long term, not just for five or ten years after they turn 65, but for maybe 30 years or 40 years after.

My father, I suppose, is a good example. We celebrated his 90th birthday last weekend, and he retired at age 55. He is very lucky. He has an Ontario teacher's indexed pension. I believe his pension now is higher than his income when he retired. It is a pension that we here can only dream about, and, probably, the less I say about that, the better. That is kind of an in-joke but everybody here got it. I wish my father many more years of happy retirement. I know the Ontario teacher's pension is a very rich pension. They did make some bad investments over the years, but over the long term they have been doing very well.

That is one of the benefits of a pension. Investments are made over the long term and the rates of return tend to be better over the long term than, for example, those of us who have RSPs, who maybe made some short-sighted investments or some not very good investments, and some people lost some money. I did not. I am a very conservative investor, with a small "c." So I am doing better than some of my colleagues, I must say. *[interjection]* That is mainly because I did not listen to their advice.

Back to pensions and the discussion paper from Alberta Finance, which I started to quote from. They said locking-in provides that people will have some pension income in retirement even if they live a long time. That is where I got derailed. To continue, this helps reduce poverty among the aged and reduces the cost pressures on government for low-income seniors. If you look at the income groups in Canada, the one group in Canadian society where the level of poverty has come down in the last 30 to 40 years, it is seniors, and there are major reasons. One of the reasons is the federal government's guaranteed income supplement, and the other is that more

women have participated in the paid labour force and so they have pensions and RSP and other investment income.

So there has been a dramatic decrease in poverty amongst seniors in Canada and pensions are one of the main reasons and the guaranteed income supplement. So I think that is instructive, that we want people to have pensions when they retire rather than living in poverty. We need pension reform that does not lose sight of these important policy objectives.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have three minutes remaining. Now we will move on to—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield, on a point of order.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House and see if there is leave to send this bill to committee?

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House—

It is already standing in the name of the honourable member.

Two things. First of all, the matter is under debate. The honourable member has three minutes and—*[interjection]* Order. And it is also eleven o'clock. We only have one hour for bills and then the agreement is, the second hour—*[interjection]* Order. The second hour is reserved for resolutions.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if there is leave to allow the member to finish his three minutes, and then the bill could be moved.

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the bill to be moved into—*[interjection]* Okay, he asked for leave—*[interjection]* Order. The bill is standing in the name of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), and the honourable member asked for

leave of the House for the member to continue, to conclude his remarks on the bill. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, there is no leave.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Federal Gun Registry

Mr. Speaker: Now the hour being 11, we will move on to resolutions, and the resolution is 3, The Gun Registry, and it is standing in the name of the honourable Attorney General who has 11 minutes remaining.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Now, where we left off last time was a discussion about one of the arguments that I had heard from a former chief of police in Winnipeg about what he perceived as the usefulness of the gun registration scheme. He made the pitch that if police officers knew in advance of responding to a call at a location whether there were registered firearms at the location, they would be better protected.

I thought that if that is the best argument, I think, indeed, this gun registration scheme is not only in trouble but I think destined to create some safety problems for our law enforcement officers, because that would create perhaps a false sense of safety when responding to those locations where there was no registered firearm, long gun.

Mr. Speaker, police officers, surely, respond to all locations and all calls with equal vigilance. You can never take something for granted, never let down your guard.

This gun registration scheme unfortunately was part of a political spin by the federal government to make it appear that this was a way to enhance the safety of Canadians, and in our view, this gun registration scheme is not about gun control, it is not about safety, as I said earlier.

It criminalizes hunters, Mr. Speaker. It criminalizes those who are requiring the use of long guns, and we should bear in mind that what may be a

weapon to some is like a fork and knife to another. But I think the essential concern here is that this gun registration scheme has spiralled so out of financial control that it has become a money pit, a money pit for the rare resources that can be allocated for public safety.

We know that there are many initiatives that are in place in this country that are proven to make Canadians safer, and yet the dollars are being diverted to the scheme which was proceeded with on blind faith, if not some trickery, and continues to be dumped into this money pit when clearly this is just a boondoggle.

I can go on and I can list the better uses, Mr. Speaker, but I want to just conclude my remarks by reiterating the position of the Manitoba government which, from the beginning, has said that this gun registration scheme was dead on arrival, was what our leader had said going back to 1995. This should not be a scheme where there is simply some tweaking. It should be abolished, full stop. The federal government should cut its losses and get out of this.

I will just conclude by noting that Manitoba, according to the Parliamentary Library of Canada, was one of, or perhaps was, the first to introduce a prosecution policy to make sure that the federal government was both accountable and financially responsible for this boondoggle, so that charges under both the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code are referred to the federal government for prosecution. On a principle basis, that is the right way to proceed. The prosecution policy is recognized as one of, if not the toughest in Canada in dealing with gun registration, making sure that there is federal responsibility and accountability for it. In the view of the department officials that went to considerable efforts to develop that prosecution policy, it is based on the consideration that it is not in the public interest for the Province to prosecute these offences.

So that is our view. I think that it is very important that the Legislature here in Manitoba now take a position and make sure that that is known, particularly to the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this House ready for the question? The question before the House is Resolution 3, Gun

Registry. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yeas and Nays, a recorded vote.

Order. A recorded vote has been requested in accordance with the Rule 23(4). The division will be deferred until the next private members' hour, which will be next Thursday at 10 a.m., where it will be conducted as the first item of business.

Res. 4—Conditional Sentencing

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross),

WHEREAS the federal government amended the Criminal Code to allow for conditional sentencing in 1995; and

WHEREAS conditional sentencing was intended to be imposed consistent with the fundamental principles of sentencing, which are that "a sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender"; and

WHEREAS Parliament created the conditional sentence to address minor crime without resorting to imprisonment; and

WHEREAS the conditional sentence was never meant as a sentencing option for crimes of serious violence, sexual assault and related offences, driving offences involving death or serious bodily harm, or theft committed in the context of a breach of trust; and

WHEREAS the courts frequently grant conditional sentences in these cases and appeal courts have frequently upheld such sentences; and

WHEREAS it is Manitoba's position that imposing a conditional sentence in these circumstances offends the fundamental principles of sentencing and brings the justice system into disrepute;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to amend the Criminal Code so that

those convicted of serious crimes of violence, including sexual assault and offences involving death or serious bodily harm cannot be eligible for a conditional sentence.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: As I stated, we know that the federal government amended the Criminal Code in 1995 to allow for conditional sentences. It is worthy to note that since that time the category of offences for which conditional sentences have been imposed has expanded, and unfortunately expanded. The Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed, indeed, that the law does not limit the type of offence for which a conditional sentence can be imposed.

Since being introduced, there have unfortunately been several instances in Manitoba alone where judges have handed down conditional sentences in what we believe to be inappropriate cases, cases involving death. It is our government's position that conditional sentences should not be available to criminals who commit serious crimes involving serious injury or death.

We know that there have been a number of high-profile cases where, indeed, conditional sentences have been imposed. This does a serious damage to public confidence, and we want to do the best that we can to restore public confidence and have sentences that are, indeed, appropriate for such serious cases. These kinds of sentences are sending the wrong message to Canadians about what is considered to be acceptable behaviour and, in fact, conditional sentences are being used inappropriately.

*(11:10)

The proper role for conditional sentences is to relieve some pressure on the justice system by allowing those guilty of crimes such as minor property offences to serve their sentences in the community. Nothing, however, in the existing law is preventing conditional sentences from being used for serious crimes.

It is our government's position that conditional sentences are wholly inappropriate for sentences involving violent offences and offences involving death. They should not, at any time, be available for sexual assaults, for dangerous driving causing death or serious injury or, in fact, for cases involving theft

or fraud or breach of trust situations and, of course, notably, cases involving crimes against children. Because conditional sentences can mean that not a single day is spent in jail this, indeed, serves to revictimize people involved in the crime and we really want this to be addressed.

Manitoba, at present, ranks sixth in the country in the number of conditional sentences that have been handed down, that is, as of the year 2000, in fact, and sentencing guidelines, it is important to note, are within the purview of the federal government. Manitoba, along with other provinces, has repeatedly urged the federal government to change this law. We have to call upon our federal government to amend the laws regarding conditional sentencing so it can more accurately reflect the expectations of Canadians and, indeed, Manitobans.

Now there are circumstances in which conditional sentences are appropriate. That is true, and we have to acknowledge that conditional sentences, in and of themselves, do not represent a free ride. There is a host of conditions that may attach to a conditional sentence, prohibitions on people with whom one may associate, prohibitions on alcohol and drug use, curfews, community service and, of course, the most restrictive of all, Mr. Speaker, the requirement that the offender is only allowed to be in their place of work or in their home.

They cannot leave for any reason including things such as grocery shopping. Living in the community under a conditional sentence is not living freely, I will concede that and we need to remember that, but it is not enough, Mr. Speaker, for serious offenders.

Our government has repeatedly demanded that the federal government change its law on conditional sentences. We along with four other provinces have submitted a brief to the federal parliamentary committee on justice and human rights presenting a number of options for reforming the use of conditional sentences.

We need to respect the fact that as long as conditional sentences remain the law in Canada, as it is, you know, there is no basis for appealing this sentence, and that is why it is so important that the federal government change the law to prevent the application of conditional sentences in the cases of serious crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, want to thank the member opposite for bringing forward this resolution and I just want to put a few comments on the record.

Conditional sentencing was introduced in Canada in 1996 to help reduce the incarceration rate. Changes to federal legislation gave judges the option of allowing offenders, sentenced to a term of less than two years, to serve their time in the community with certain conditions. Initially, when conditional sentences were introduced they were intended for non-violent crimes like breach of trust, thefts, property and drug offences. In the year since, judges have approved conditional sentences for violent offences such as manslaughter, armed robbery, spousal and sexual abuse.

Conditional sentences allow convicted offenders to avoid jail time and serve their sentences in the community if they abide by judge-imposed restrictions such as curfew, drug and alcohol abstinence, no weapons and so on. It is up to 80% cheaper to send a prisoner home rather than keep him or her in jail. Typically, a person serving a conditional sentence is allowed to work, to go grocery shopping and attend religious services, but must abide by a curfew and keep away from booze. The curfews are policed randomly.

In a position paper, the ministers from Manitoba, Alberta, B.C., Ontario and Nova Scotia say they support conditional sentences as an effective and appropriate mechanism to divert minor offences and offenders away from the prison system. However, the ministers' note intended as a method to address minor crime without resorting to imprisonment has become, in practice, a sanctioned use in cases of very serious crime. Under the law, courts must always consider using a conditional sentence if the likely jail term would be less than two years. Key sentencing principles include denunciation, deterrence and reparation to the victim. Then Statistics Canada reported in 2000-2001, conditional sentences were handed out in 15 697 cases, 9 percent of all sentences delivered across Canada that year.

In conclusion, I will just make a few more comments. I know that our leader, the member and MLA for Kirkfield Park, has stated that even the Crown attorneys association has called the Doer government soft on crime. The fact remains that every Manitoban has the right to be safe and feel safe

in their home and in their community. Manitobans deserve a justice system that puts victims ahead of criminals.

In response to the member's resolution that has come up, the last part of it, I would also concur with: THEREFORE be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly, this being under the jurisdiction of the government of Manitoba, urge the federal government to amend the Criminal Code so that those convicted of serious crimes of violence, including sexual assault and offences involving death or serious bodily harm, cannot be eligible for conditional sentence.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the resolution.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to put a few words on the record on the resolution prior to what it appears to be its passage.

I think what is worthy of note is the very first WHEREAS, that being that the federal government amended the Criminal Code back in 1995 to take into consideration conditional sentencing. I do believe at the time that you had the province of Manitoba and other jurisdictions that saw the merit of having conditional sentences. I do believe that the will of the day back in 1995 was to see us move in that direction.

As the resolution has accurately pointed out, conditional sentences are being more and more used in other areas that cause a great deal of public discomfort and a great deal of discomfort for myself personally. I think that what we recognize is that not only is it important for us to be able to address resolutions of this nature inside this Chamber, but equally it is important for us to ensure that there is dialogue with the federal government on issues of this nature.

I truly do believe that the initial intent of the conditional sentences was quite positive. In fact, if that is not the case, if the province at the time did oppose it, I definitely was not aware of it and would welcome and invite government officials to provide me any information whatsoever if in fact they had opposed the original intent of conditional sentencing. I am not necessarily hearing that. Because I am not hearing that I think that it is safe then to assume that

whenever you bring in something, you never know how courts are going to react. They are independent in nature. I think that we have to respect that.

Having said that, we are starting to see some of those cases come down, which, by using conditional sentencing, it is causing concern. For that reason, I do think that there is merit, but I do not think that it has to be a party issue. We trust that this resolution will in fact be given consideration. We do not have a problem in terms of this resolution going through this Legislature.

With those few words, I will end it at that. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is Resolution 4, Conditional Sentencing. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

* (11:20)

Res. 5—Community Foundations

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 5, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), Community Foundations.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that,

WHEREAS the community foundation movement in Manitoba, and in Canada, began with the establishment of The Winnipeg Foundation in 1921; and

WHEREAS the number of community foundations in Manitoba has grown to 31 today; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has more community foundations per capita than any other region of the country; and

WHEREAS from 2000 to 2001 the amount of grants provided to Manitoba communities through community foundations increased by \$2.5 million or 29.2 percent; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's community foundations had more than \$332 million in assets under

management at the end of 2001, a 50% increase from the previous year; and

WHEREAS growth of community foundations in Manitoba generated enough demand to hire a Regional Coordinator in July 2001 to identify needs of community foundations; provide information, education and technical assistance to community foundations; strengthen relationships between communities and community foundations; encourage communication amongst community foundations; and promote philanthropy and the community foundation movement; and

WHEREAS community foundations pool the charitable gifts of many donors into permanent, income-earning endowment funds that benefit local communities; and

WHEREAS community foundations make grants to support a wide range of local initiatives, from health, education and social services to arts and culture and the environment; and

WHEREAS community foundations provide leadership to their communities by bringing people together from all sectors to identify and address local issues; and

WHEREAS the community foundation movement is often described as the fastest growing form of philanthropy in Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the province's community foundations on their demonstrated commitment and leadership in strengthening local communities across Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider continuing to work in co-operation with Community Foundations of Canada, the national umbrella organization for community foundations, to broaden the community foundation movement in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Dyck: I know members opposite enjoyed that speech and would have me just read it again, right? No, I want to put a few, and it will be just a few, comments that I want to put on the record.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. As I have followed the community foundations, more locally possibly than provincially, over the last 20, 30 years, I just want to put a few comments on the record regarding the area that I represent. I know that Morden and Winkler, both communities, have community foundations, however, the principle of it was started in Winkler by a former mayor, Mr. H. F. Wiebe.

Now, it was the principle of it. He indicated at that time, and this was at the outset when Triple E, who was a recreational manufacturing company, started into business and they needed capital in order to be able to produce the commodity that they had started on. They had a dream. They started off with a small trailer, which was known as the Compact Triple E, and so they needed some capital in order to be able to move this dream forward.

So, the mayor of the day, who was Mr. H. F. Wiebe, contacted local businesses and had them put a pool of money together. Now, it is somewhere between \$180,000 to \$200,000, that he had consolidated, put in, simply as seed money. So this is what gave them the capital that they needed in order to pursue the dream that they had.

Now, incidentally, that money was paid back within the next few years and what then took place was the town, at that time, took over the initiative and decided that they would start to develop a pool of money which would be there for any business or industry that would want to start up.

Now, in my discussion with the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), he indicated that in the 1980s he also had been working. We were in government at that time and had been working with this idea in mind, a concept that was brought forward.

It is my understanding that the ENSIS funds, the Crocus funds and some of the other funds within the province sort of started with the initiation of that idea. I know that the Grow Bonds, which is another forum started in the province of Manitoba, was used extensively within my community that I represent. I know that companies such as Keystone industries, Winkler Meats and a number of other corporations

within our local community have benefited by these funds.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the House for considering this resolution and certainly would encourage some debate on it, but also ask that we would pass this resolution, as has been outlined. Thank you.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I am pleased to rise before the House today to speak on the private member's resolution regarding community foundations, which has been put forth by the member opposite. This resolution allows the government to undertake two tasks.

The first is to commend the province's community foundations on their demonstrated commitment and leadership in strengthening of local communities across Manitoba; secondly, to continue working in partnership with Community Foundations of Canada with the intent of broadening the community foundation movement in Canada.

We are all aware of the important contributions that community foundations make to our province. They pool charitable gifts into income-earning endowment funds. These endowment funds build and support charitable activities in our communities. They also provide community leadership and are instrumental in providing grants.

Individual community foundations across Canada have supported local initiatives in such areas as health, education, social services, arts, culture and recreation. Community foundations are very popular with persons who want to donate to a variety of charities. In 2003, Community Foundations of Canada provided over \$95 million in grants to community organizations across the country.

This government does recognize the important contributions that Community Foundations of Canada and the community foundations in Manitoba have made to this province. In fact, Winnipeg established Canada's first community foundation in 1921. This government has encouraged the support of community foundations in the development of programs in this province.

For instance, in 2003 this government announced a new sport initiative for the province which focussed on remote, inner urban communities

and the Aboriginal and immigrant population. In this case, funding was provided by all levels and by the government to encourage and help young people to participate in sports. The government encouraged support from other partners including community foundations. In 2001, at the Community Foundations of Canada Manitoba regional meeting, our then-Intergovernmental Affairs Minister announced additional support to community foundations.

The minister recognized the important leadership role of the community foundations. The minister also recognized how this strengthened our community capacities. It was announced at that meeting that the government would be expanding the support to the community foundations movement in the province.

Under the Rural Economic Development Initiative, funds were provided to 13 new community foundations. In 2000 this government also declared May as Leave a Legacy Month. This was part of a campaign to encourage Manitobans to remember their favourite charity in their will.

This was a collaborative effort of known profitable organizations, financial planners, foundations, community foundations, corporate funders and fundraising organizations in Manitoba. This government believes that community foundations builds self-reliance through a strategic partnership with government, business and community organizations. The community foundations movement is essential in helping to strengthen all the communities across this province. This is why this government will continue to work with Manitoba community foundations and will continue to work in partnership with Community Foundations of Canada with the intent of broadening the community foundations movement in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:30)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, was just wanting to add a few words on the record in regard to it and in support of the resolution. It is a resolution which actually gives a great deal of credit to community-minded people. What I thought was most noteworthy is that it is the sixth resolution where it really talks in terms about the province and the significance of how the province has played in comparison to other provinces potentially. Manitoba does exceptionally well. I think we should be proud of that fact and encourage the provincial government

to acknowledge that. That is in essence what we are doing here. We are acknowledging the importance of community foundations. Manitoba has done exceptionally well in this area.

We want to be able to formally, I guess, suggest to the government that it needs to continue to work to ensure the foundations remain healthy and, where we can, to even expand upon it. So we see it as a positive resolution and are glad to see it here before us today. With that, we are quite prepared to allow it to pass. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Resolution 5, Community Foundations. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?
[Agreed]

Res. 6—Ukrainian Famine

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 6, Ukrainian Famine, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you request leave of the House to have this matter withdrawn for now? There are some plans to reintroduce that when some representatives of the community can be here.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to—

Just for correction. The honourable Government House Leader, when he used the word "withdraw," I think he meant to not call it today, but call it the next sitting or at a later date. Is that correct? Okay. Is there leave of the House? *[Agreed]*

Res. 7—Retaining Youth in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 7, Retaining Youth in Rural Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the member from Pembina, that

WHEREAS in April 2002 a discussion paper commissioned by the Canadian Rural Partnership

and researched by R. A. Malatest & Associates entitled *Rural Youth Migration: Exploring the Reality Behind the Myths*, A Rural Youth Discussion Paper, was released; and

WHEREAS this document reflected the input of more than 2100 current and former rural youth, community leaders and government officials from all regions across Canada, ranging in age from 15 to 29; and

WHEREAS the results of this research suggest that out-migration from rural areas will likely continue, if not accelerate, in the near future; and

WHEREAS, irrespective of their current status, almost all youth were unanimous in their opinion that there was a need for a "Rural Youth Strategy"; and

WHEREAS it is estimated that, at most, only one in four rural youth who leave their community will return to the same community within 10 years; and

WHEREAS only 19 percent of study respondents thought that their rural community afforded an opportunity to pursue post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS only 23 percent of study respondents believed they would be able to make a good living should they remain in their community; and

WHEREAS 74 percent of study respondents aged 15 to 19 indicated that they intend to live in the urban community in the future; and

WHEREAS a 2002 Statistics Canada research paper entitled *Recent Migration Patterns in Rural and Small Town Canada* shows that between 1971 and 1996, rural and small-town out-migration in Canada was consistently higher in the 20 to 24 age class; and

WHEREAS the Rural Youth Discussion Paper contained more than 20 strategic options designed to enhance the attractiveness of rural communities to Canadian youth that could be implemented by communities, employers and other agencies; and

WHEREAS if changes are not made to increase accessibility of youth in rural communities into education and training; to enhance employment

opportunities for rural youth; to encourage activity participation by youth in civic decisions; to enhance tax and fiscal programs for youth choosing to remain in, or move to a rural setting; to implement work orientation and rural "exposure" programs for urban youth; and to increase the amount of social activities, infrastructure targeted at rural youth, there is a risk that Manitoba will continue to suffer net losses of its rural population aged 15 to 19.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider working in cooperation with the Canadian Rural Partnership, municipal governments, employers, educational institutions, members of the community and rural youth to implement strategies to help rural communities to become more "youth friendly."

Mr. Speaker: Order.

For the House, the honourable member was deviating from the resolution and adding words in. So is it the will of the House for it to be printed in Hansard as printed? *[Agreed]*

So it has been moved by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

WHEREAS IN—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few words on regarding the motion. I am sure that both sides of the House have this retaining youth in both the interest of the province, the growth of the province. As the cities, if they fill up, the smaller communities dwindle down to less than what we need, becoming senior citizens towns. I know in Lakeside in particular, we have a growth in towns like Stonewall, but the smaller communities like Balmoral and Gunton are losing population.

As you move farther outside the 50-mile radius of the city of Winnipeg, it is an initiative that we feel is something that we need to work on and try and move forward. I know that the educational side of the Province is trying to assist in trying to help

develop more schooling through nursing and other technical schools where they can get their trades and try and get jobs within their own community.

Mr. Speaker, it is to be noted that with the technical schools that are popping up around the province, I believe we all cannot be doctors, we all cannot be lawyers, but we do have a niche market whereby carpet people are making about the same much money as a doctor, a lawyer, and I know there are a lot of mechanics about the same way, that are real business people. We like to see them move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave it at that and let the other members put a few words on the record.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today in the spirit of bipartisanship and speak in favour, with my colleagues across the House, in favour of this resolution.

There are a number of things that our government has done since coming to office in 1999 to promote the development in rural Manitoba. I would just like to list a few of them briefly here. We have continued to provide financial support to the 4-H Clubs, and I might add that I met with young leaders of the 4-H in the Legislature here not too long ago and had a very good discussion with them.

We have put Rural Forum in place, which is a fantastic opportunity for all people in the province to get together to discuss rural issues. We have got the *Hey kids* Web site up and running, which is engaging our youth and giving them information and opportunity to link up to other sites and so forth, something very critical in terms of communicating to rural Manitoba which does not always have all the advantages that we do here in the city.

One of our major achievements I think is the introduction of Agriculture in the Classroom-Manitoba, which is put in place to develop curriculum-based programs and resources to help our educators get the message across to our children and I did have the pleasure there, as well, in speaking to this group not too long ago on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk).

* (11:40)

Access to post-secondary education, I can just point to the expansion of the adult learning centre in Ashern, Fieldstone Ventures, which we have enhanced recently. I would like to also point to Campus Manitoba in Eriksdale, something that is working, as well. Of course, when we think of rural, we should also be thinking of northern Manitoba. Our initiatives in constituting the University College of the North, I think is something that cannot be underemphasized.

In terms of wage subsidies, something that the PMR mentions, we continue to offer assistance through the STEP program and I also want to point to Hometown Manitoba, something that was recently introduced by our government through the Rural Economic Development Initiative program, a program designed to enhance Main Street and public places but, also, to promote local products, services and talents which creates a market and encourages our youth to remain.

It also focusses attention on tourism which is a growth industry in our province. Tourism is fundamental to the growth in rural Manitoba given that it is bringing in hard currency from other countries and other areas of Canada, so it is something that is a direct benefit.

I would be remiss if I did not make mention of the Bridging Generations Initiative which the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives put in place, Project 2000 something our former Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bill Uruski, was very keen on, this has put in place a farm mentoring program and has also put in place a mechanism where older, retiring farmers can pass on their facilities to young farmers. This is absolutely critical in the intergenerational transfer of farms.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I could go on at great length but I understand, I realize that other members would like to, possibly, put some comments on the record. So on that note, I would take my seat and just conclude by saying that we are proud to support this resolution put forth by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, wanted to stand and rise and put a few words on the record in regard to this resolution, Retaining Youth in Rural Manitoba, is of critical importance. I think, in most part, all political parties acknowledge that fact but

maybe at times have different ways of trying to address it. In certain areas the government, maybe, has not done the types of things it could have done in other areas. They have made some significant improvements.

When we look at the university of Thompson and the idea of having a university out in Thompson with technology, the importance of obtaining some sort of post-secondary education while not having to go to an urban centre, Mr. Speaker, is a positive thing.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we see what the resolution is calling for, is for the government to actually work with other organizations, in particular the Canadian rural partnership. It is good that it points out that Canadian rural partnership for the simple reason that there was the huge discussion that involved over 2100 people, different types of stakeholders, if we can put it that way, who came together and came up with a discussion paper to talk about rural youth and how we can implement some sort of a strategy that would really make a difference.

As it is pointed out in the resolution itself, there were more than 20 strategic options so there are ideas that are out there. We need to be able to tap into those ideas. It is a huge concern, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize the importance of rural Manitoba, as other members of this Chamber do, and the youth are the future. If you look at some of the stats, there are a couple of them that were really interesting, you know, whereas 74 percent of studying respondents aged 15 to 19 indicated they intend to live in an urban community in the future.

We need to do what we can in terms of ensuring that the youth see a future also in rural Manitoba and we do what we can in terms of ensuring that synergy or that energy is there so that we have youth that want to be able to stay out in rural Manitoba, as most, I would ultimately argue, probably would.

Mr. Speaker, I sense that the government wants to be able to deal with another resolution. I do not need to be long-winded on this resolution. We just want to indicate our support for it. We recognize the importance of young people being in rural Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Resolution 7, Retaining Youth in Rural Manitoba. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?
[Agreed]

Res. 8—Korean War Veterans

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar),

WHEREAS July 27, 2003, marked the 50th anniversary of the ceasefire that ended the Korean War; and

WHEREAS almost 34 000 Canadians, including many Manitobans, served in the Korean conflict and as peacekeepers in the subsequent cease-fire, making Korea one of Canada's largest military mobilizations; and

WHEREAS 516 Canadians paid the ultimate sacrifice, including 37 Manitobans and 17 soldiers from CFB Shilo who died in a train accident near Canoe River, B.C., November 21, 1950, en route to Korea; and

WHEREAS our province recognizes the sacrifices of those who have lost their lives in war through the commemorative naming of more than 4200 lakes, bays, islands and other geographical features; and

WHEREAS in September 1998 the Korean Veterans Association erected a cairn in Brookside Cemetery in Winnipeg honouring Manitobans who lost their lives in Korea and those who died in the Canoe River train accident; and

WHEREAS Manitobans who served in the Korean War wish to have one day set aside each year to remember their comrades.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider recognizing July 27 as Korean War Veterans Day in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for St. James, seconded by the honourable Member for Selkirk,

WHEREAS—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Korzeniowski: July 27, 2003, marked the 50th anniversary of the cease-fire that ended the Korean War. On this date I had the honour and privilege of reading this resolution as a proclamation at a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary at Kapyong Barracks that was put on by the Korean War Veterans Association and then-president Hugh MacKenzie.

Almost 34 000 Canadians served in the Korean War and the subsequent cease-fire. There were 516 Canadians that paid the ultimate sacrifice, and 37 Manitobans and 17 soldiers from Shilo who died in the train wreck.

When on June 25, 1950, the forces of North Korea crossed the 38th parallel into the Republic of Korea, little did we know then the sacrifice that would be paid by Canadians serving in that faraway land. By the time that the civil war had ended, nearly 6 million civilian and military personnel had perished. Nearly half a million Chinese combatants were killed in action, as were soldiers from 16 nations, including Canada, fighting under United Nations command.

Tragedy struck Canadian troops early even before arriving in Korea, when 16 gunners of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery were killed in a train collision at Canoe River, B.C., on November 21, 1950. My father was one of those survivors.

A few weeks later the first Canadian troops arrived in Korea, the Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The following April this unit is awarded a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation for preventing an enemy breakthrough of the U.N. lines at Kapyong.

In May 1951, the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade, comprised of the Second Battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment and of the Royal 22nd Regiment, along with supporting arms, entered the Korean theatre.

In June, 2PPCLI, which had been attached to the Twenty-Eighth Commonwealth Brigade in turn became part of the 1st Commonwealth Division. The

Brigade's first important battle took place at Shai-li at the end of May.

* (11:50)

The people of Winnipeg, in particular, have reason to remember the Korean War because at the corner of Kenaston and Grant is a Canadian Forces Base, the Kapyong Barracks, which we all know is going to be soon moving. It was at Kapyong in Korea that soldiers of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry did what no other soldiers in the United Nations Coalition could do, as Lieutenant-Colonel Retired John Bishop wrote in his memoir: They stood fast. They held the ground in the face of overwhelming odds against the human wave of soldiers that the North Koreans and the Chinese sent. The opposing armies dug in and enemies faced each other across a no-man's land ranging from a few hundred metres in width to several kilometres.

On July 27, 1953, the armistice agreement was implemented. Military demarcation lines were fixed and the opposing armies withdrew to 2 kilometres from the line to establish the Demilitarized Zone. The peacekeeping years began with the observation and patrol of the 244 kilometres of the Demilitarized Zone that stretched across the Korean Peninsula.

The Canadian sector included some of their former battlegrounds, such as Hill 355, a permanent monument to courage, battle and bloodshed. The Canadian Brigade's operational role in Korea ended on November 8, 1954. The Second Battalion, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, left for home on April 6, 1955, the last Canadian infantry battalion to serve in Korea.

The cease-fire still holds and, after 28 years, the DMZ is still patrolled jointly by troops from the U.S. and the Republic of Korea. It was not a sacrifice made in vain, it was to save a nation from tyranny and oppression. Soldiers set a standard for Canada's commitment to the world community in its efforts to bring and democracy to all nations.

Korea was aptly called the forgotten war. For decades the media ignored it and for many years references to the war were footnotes to history and frequently refers to as the Korean Conflict.

Our province recognizes the sacrifices of those who have lost their lives in war through the

commemorative naming of more than 4200 lakes, islands, bays and other geographical features. In 1998, Manitoba became home to the Korean Veterans Association Cenotaph of Remembrance created through the efforts of the Korea Veterans Association of Canada under then-President Norm Van Tassel and the Manitoba Keystone Unit 17.

As the Branch President of PPCLI Association, Leonard King eloquently described in his speech at the commemoration, "The fact that the Korean War was never officially declared a war had allowed the conflict to fade from public's attention. It is with a sense of accomplishment and honour that we now recognize the true sacrifices of our Army, Navy and Air Force. The forgotten war will be forgotten no more."

Mr. Speaker, bringing in this resolution is also a personal tribute to my father, Mr. Cleveland S. Grant, to RCHA and all those men and women who participated in the Korean War, and to mother Myrtle, and all those family members who kept the home fires burning, hoping for their safe return. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I will just put on a few short words in regard to the resolution brought forth by the member. In recognizing that it is a resolution that we support, we are in a Chamber here that is based on the democratic right of having freedom of choice. There were sacrifices made by people in the wars throughout the times and this is one way of recognizing the individuals that fought in the Korean War. The idea of setting aside the special day on July 27 of each year to mark this, I believe, is a worthy effort and I congratulate the member for bringing forth the resolution. We would be in support of this resolution.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, stand in support of the resolution. Being a member of the Canadian Forces and served for a few years, I had opportunity to meet some of the different vets, even vets from World War II and Korea. I think that it is most appropriate that we would acknowledge the contributions that were made from our Korean vets. I think this is an honourable way of doing that.

Let me add to it I think there are other things that we could be doing. The other day I had raised the issue of the Rotunda and the Pool of the Black Star. I

had indicated how wonderful it would be if we would take that whitewashed wall and do something more tangible with it, to show some sort of a pictorial history of Manitoba's province. You can incorporate so many things into something of that nature. I would suggest to you what would be an appropriate thing is acknowledging our Vets, whether it is from the Korean War or other wars. I would suggest, not only would it be nice for us to designate a day, but we have thousands of people that come to this beautiful building. We do already have some murals of wars from the past.

I think that if the government wanted to take another step in honouring, not only the Korean War Vets, but all Vets, let us get rid of the whitewashed wall in the Pool of the Black Star and incorporate into that some sort of an historical perspective of our province that would reflect on the people from the past that have made our province. I would suggest to you that it would be most appropriate that we would reflect on our Korean Vets. Then when we have the tour guides going through, then it is being talked about.

We have children that come to this Legislature all the time. To be able to have the tour guides show the children a pictorial history of our province that highlights issues like our Korean Vets and so forth, I think that would be a very strong, positive thing in a very real and tangible way.

So, it is with pride we stand up and suggest that it is a very positive resolution. We commend the member for bringing it forward, and I would request the government that they also give consideration to my comments in regard to the Pool of the Black Star. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Resolution 8, Korean War Veterans. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the Resolution? *[Agreed]*

Res. 9—Graffiti Prevention Programs

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 9, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Southdale, Graffiti Prevention Programs.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck):

WHEREAS graffiti is an act of vandalism that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to remove or cover every year; and

WHEREAS the presence of graffiti causes an area to look unsafe, making people concerned about their personal safety and reducing the appeal and property values of that area; and

WHEREAS graffiti may lead to an increase in other crimes and acts of violence; and

WHEREAS gang members or associates may use graffiti as a method of communication to promote a gang, mark territory, recruit new members or intimidate a neighbourhood; and

WHEREAS efforts such as the Graffiti Awareness and Abatement Program, a joint City of Calgary/Calgary Police Service initiative for recording, reporting and removing graffiti, led to a noticeable reduction in graffiti; and

WHEREAS graffiti prevention techniques such as motion detector lights, increased lighting, locked gates, clinging vines and shrubbery, durable fences and anti-graffiti coatings can all help property become less of a graffiti target.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider working together with the province's cities to formulate a comprehensive graffiti prevention program that includes educating property and business owners on the use of graffiti prevention techniques to help deter would-be graffiti writers.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Southdale, seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

WHEREAS—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Is there leave not to see the clock until the matter is disposed of?

Mr. Speaker: Is there will in the House to not see the clock until this matter is disposed of. *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mr. Reimer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a follow-up to the introduction of the resolution, I think we are all very, very aware of a lot of the graffiti and tagging that we see in the city of Winnipeg and, in particular, all cities and towns here in Manitoba. It is becoming more and more of a problem and I think that citizens of Manitoba are saying that there should be some sort of resolution or working towards a solution of trying to combat this type of defamation of public property and private property.

It is something that is becoming more and more aware of the problems that it is creating. It is the eyesore, not only for the community but for a lot of the business people, that they have to try to clean their buildings. It is a deterrent to tourism. People get apprehensive when they go into an area where they see a lot of graffiti or the marks of gangs or identification as pointed out in the resolution.

It is something where you have to bring the stakeholders together, not only the law enforcement but the provincial government, the city of Winnipeg and other cities throughout Manitoba to work with the local law enforcement and the communities and the business leaders to try to combat this program.

I know there are programs like the Crime Stoppers and things like that, but these often add in trying to bring a solution to this problem. So I think that the resolution is something that will be sort of like a wake-up call to the people in regard to trying to get some sort of resolution on the problem. I would encourage all members to support the resolution to try to eliminate this problem here in Manitoba and in our urban areas, not only the city of Winnipeg, but throughout all of Manitoba.

* (12:00)

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise before the House today to speak

on the private member's resolution regarding graffiti prevention programs, which has been brought forth by the member opposite.

I would like to begin by saying that I do agree with this proposed resolution. I am so pleased that this issue is being raised, because it gives me the chance to speak of the many great things this government has been doing to encourage communities across the province to reduce and eradicate graffiti.

Graffiti is not only an eyesore, but also an illegal act, which raises expenses for local business owners and home owners. That is why, since we became government, we have been working hard with local organizations, residents and the City of Winnipeg Police Service to develop programs that address this issue which deal with the problem of graffiti in our neighbourhoods.

Under this program, Neighbourhoods Alive!, we have developed and expanded Lighthouses as well as the Urban Green Team, which undertakes a variety of activities such as graffiti removal.

Part of this program in Thompson is the Community Action Team Graffiti Removal Project. In 2001 the province contributed 2000 for the implementation of a community beautification project designed to remove gang-related and other graffiti from buildings and fences. The Thompson Boys and Girls Club administer this project.

We have also funded mural development programs, which will help to prevent graffiti and beautify certain neighbourhoods. This has also been extended to Thompson, where six murals on businesses and apartment buildings are being painted.

This was a partnership involving the Thompson Spirit Committee, building owners, northern artists and local youth—solutions, proactive, preventative solutions. We also continually support Graffiti Art Programming Inc. in Winnipeg, which provides a drop-in art program offering introductory drawing and painting classes for youth at risk.

In 2003 we provided 55 000 continued support to this program. All this is to say that we have been

working with the cities in this province on graffiti prevention and elimination programs.

The public, including many business and home-owners in many areas across this province, have also been taking the initiative and working on new, innovative ideas to reduce and prevent graffiti.

Community organizations and many dedicated volunteers have been working hard to clean up their neighbourhoods. Their involvement is also a valuable, instrumental part of these programs.

Finally, I would like to finish by saying that I concur with the resolution on graffiti prevention programs, as it is already consistent with our current policies and programs. We are always happy to support what we are already doing. Therefore we will continue to be proactive in the goal of reducing graffiti in our cities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few words on the record on this resolution. We support this resolution. We certainly are strong in wanting to reduce the amount of graffiti in the city of Winnipeg and where it occurs elsewhere, because this really is important in terms of beautifying our city. As other cities have found, it is important generally in reducing the incidence of crime and improving safety.

I do think that there are a couple of issues that need some attention. One is if we are going to make progress in this area, we actually need to have some measure of how much graffiti is out there. I say to the government that at this point, you know, it is pretty hard to measure, to change what you are not measuring and certainly if we are going to make progress in this area, we need to be able to in some consistent fashion monitor it.

In this context, what I would say to the government is this, that the report that I have is that since this government was first elected in 1999, certainly in parts of the city, there has been an increase in the amount of graffiti, not a decrease. I think what that says is that what the government is doing is not working so you need to reassess it.

That is one of the reasons that we are ready to support this resolution that has been brought forward by the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer). So you can stand up and pontificate all you like, but the

reality is that the situation in parts of Winnipeg is getting worse not better and that you will not be able to provide any counter to that until you start providing some kind of quantitative measurement and show that in fact it is getting better.

The second point that I would make, and this I would see is a positive direction, that people like Steve Wilson have recognized that part of the answer here is to take the graffiti artists and train them to be real artists and productive and give them an option. So, I would applaud the efforts that Steve Wilson and the others involved with the Graffiti Gallery are

making, because I see this as one of the positive things that can emerge. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Resolution 9, Graffiti Prevention Programs. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?
[Agreed]

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past twelve noon, we will now recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 3, 2004

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